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Rudolph Schaeffer

THE RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER SCHOOL OF DESIGN:  
ART IN SAN FRANCISCO SINCE 1915

Interviews Conducted by  
Margaretta K. Mitchell  
1981

Underwritten by  
The L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation

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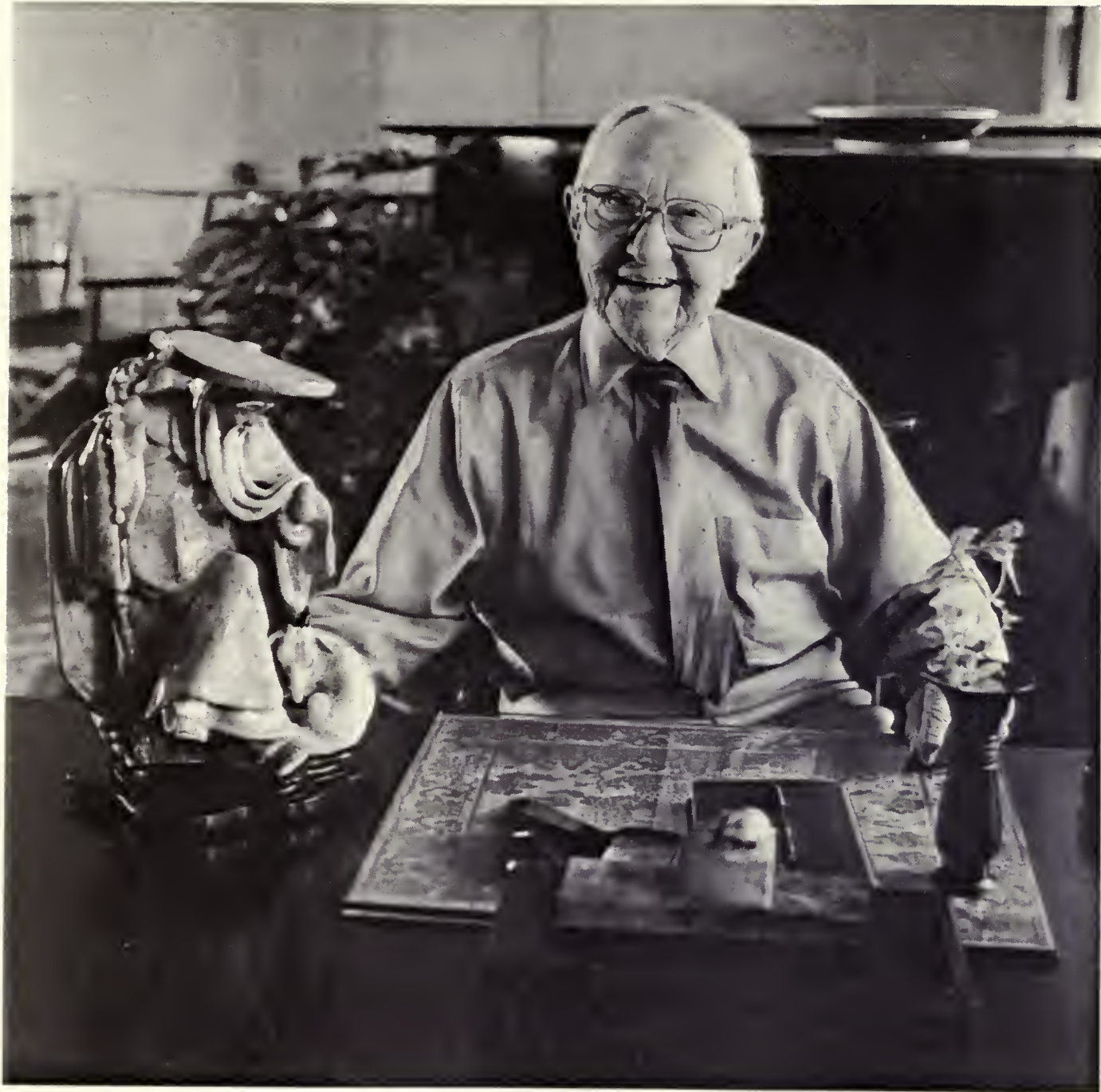
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RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER

1981

*Photograph by Margaretta K. Mitchell*



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## Rudolph Schaeffer

Rudolph Schaeffer, who for 58 years operated an internationally acclaimed school of color and design, died Saturday at his San Francisco home. He was 101.

His Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design, which he operated first in Chinatown and last at Mariposa and Utah streets, turned out an army of designers, architects, interior decorators, teachers and colorists.

He was in the forefront of art education in the perception and use of colors.

In a 1979 interview in *The Chronicle*, Mr. Schaeffer said, "We have to delve into the secrets of color. The reason color study is so important is because color is differentiated light and we can't live without light."

Simply stated, Mr. Schaeffer said, his theory holds that "the infinite number of degrees between any contrasts progress in a regular, rhythmic harmony; that each degree is related. It is the task of good design to find the right relations for any endeavor — a painting, the layout of a restaurant, a living room, a piece of fabric or the shape and color of a bowl."

The theory was exquisitely expressed in the simple but rich design of the school, in a garden atop a steep slope of Potrero Hill. Especial-

ly charming was his small house, filled with light and beautiful objects, which he created beside the school.

After Mr. Schaeffer closed his school in 1984, he taped his reminiscences for the oral history library at the University of California at Berkeley.

Last year, he lectured at a graduate school, the California Institute of Integral Studies, in San Francisco.

A native of Clare, Mich., Mr. Schaeffer, a lifelong bachelor, studied in Detroit and in Europe, taught color design at the forerunner of the California College of Arts and crafts and was a lecturer at UC Berkeley and at Stanford University.

In 1914, he was one of 25 teachers sent to Europe by the U.S. Commissioner of Education to study the role of color in a school curriculum.

He was trapped there by the outbreak of World War I. When he got back to America, he said, with no job and little money, "I decided to come to San Francisco. I've never been sorry."

A memorial service is being planned.



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## INTRODUCTION -- Rudolph Schaeffer

Rudolph Schaeffer has been a prime mover and participant in developments in California art and design since 1915. At age ninety-five, he is one of the pioneers in the field of color study, having virtually introduced the formal teaching of color design in this country over sixty years ago. In his lifetime of teaching, Mr. Schaeffer developed a philosophy of design and color which applies to our physical environment and mental condition. His approach to art signifies a way of life through a study of aesthetics: Art as Lived, and Life as Art.

The founder of his own school, The Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design, he also was a leader in the integration of Eastern aesthetic principles with Western art; as a member of the Asian Art Society, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Avery Brundage Collection at the De Young Museum. His own unique collection of Asian Art is exhibited widely and used by Mr. Schaeffer in his demonstrations of color design.

Mr. Schaeffer's career has been always at the locus of California design. As a young man in Pasadena, California, he was at the center of the Arts and Crafts movement, teaching at Throop Polytechnic School. As early as 1914 he was involved in studying the role of color in art education, for which he was sent by the United States Commission on Education to Munich, Germany, then one of the finest centers of public education in the world. It is from there that he came to San Francisco where he has lived ever since.

Mr. Schaeffer's experiments with prismatic color have changed the use of color in textiles and environmental design and can be traced in the work of his many successful students.

In addition to his positive influence on the creative growth and development of countless students and teachers, Mr. Schaeffer has been an active creator and designer of furniture, textiles, flower arrangements, interior spaces and accessories. For over sixty-five years he has done color consultation and has frequently lectured and given demonstrations pertaining to his color and design concepts.

To summarize, Rudolph Schaeffer is a living treasure!

Margaretta K. Mitchell  
Interviewer

Berkeley, California  
December, 1981

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Rudolph Schaeffer was first mentioned to me by a student who studied with him in 1917 at the California School of Art in San Francisco. Schaeffer was then a young avant garde teacher fresh from study in Munich, Germany, deeply into developing new theories to break away from the monocromatic "mud sauce" school of painting (as he called it) into a new vision of light and color.

The student who brought me to Rudolph Schaeffer is the well-known photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, whose work for Harper's Bazaar magazine put her at the American cultural center for thirty years. Schaeffer's ideas on color and design were the concepts that gave her the edge (she said), when new color films and processes came to the market in the 1930s.

In March of 1980, Louise and her husband Mike Wolfe came to San Francisco. I arranged a reunion for them with Rudolph--an afternoon visit at the Schaeffer cottage alongside the school buildings on Potrero Hill. There Rudolph, age 94, and Louise, age 83, embraced and embarked upon an animated conversation that drew them to that vital period of their past. (I have included a transcript of that conversation in an appendix to this oral history.)

That afternoon, March 10, 1980, was for all of us an experience in living history. I discovered then that Rudolph Schaeffer was a member of the Arts and Crafts movement, that he was a living link to the vision which we look back upon today as the first truly American art movement, one which is sometimes referred to as the American Renaissance. On the West Coast, the expression of this cultural consolidation was one which pressed science and technology, art and lifestyle into a single value structure. The ideal was a life lived in harmony with nature and an art which reflected this unity. Thus, at the Throop Institute in Pasadena, California, manual arts were taught alongside academic subjects. The decorative arts flourished; for a time there was an integration between the arts and the crafts with a particular emphasis on useful objects in ceramics, wood, and glass.

It was a unique experience watching this elderly gentleman display his charismatic charm and wit with his former student. After our conversation he guided us through the gallery, pointing out various pieces from his collection of Asian art. The most unusual treat was found behind a series of cupboard doors which opened to shelves filled with Chinese bowls, jars, and cups of every size and shape, each bank of shelves arranged floor to ceiling in a different shading of color, arranged according to intensity.

I described Rudolph Schaeffer and discussed his ideas in my grant proposal, "The California Dream," prepared for the California Council for the Humanities. It was read by Jillian Steiner Sandrock of the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation in Oakland. She did not realize that Mr. Schaeffer was still living.

She suggested that I write a small separate grant proposal for a formal oral history to be carried out through the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley--providing they were interested.

Willa Baum, Department Head of the Regional Oral History Office, was enthusiastic from the start. We prepared the necessary documents and applied in July of 1980. The grant was awarded. Before I began in January of 1981, I had to learn the techniques of the oral historian as opposed to the interviewer/writer. So I joined a seminar in oral history offered by Willa Baum during the winter quarter in the Graduate Division of the History Department at the University.

During the same period, I met with Suzanne Riess who was my guide for the length of the project. I also read as much as possible in preparation for the interviews. I had the good fortune to have borrowed from Rudolph Schaeffer an M.A. thesis (using oral history techniques) by Ann Angelo, written for a degree in museology at J. F. Kennedy University. Her work was not yet filed in the Archives of American Art, but was the first document produced on Schaeffer's life and work.

My next task to accomplish before I could interview was to chose the best audio equipment. Not knowing whether it would ever be possible to produce any video recording of Rudolph Schaeffer (but wishing it could be possible), I went for advice to Mike Francisco of the Television Office at the University. He suggested I use reel-to-reel audio equipment with a high quality microphone for the best audio fidelity. As it turned out, I had to use both that and cassette tape because the transcriber requested cassettes. This complication caused a delay in my preparation but was in the end a wise choice for future use because all of Rudolph Schaeffer's ideas and teaching style can best be seen reinforced by hearing and seeing him perform, seeing the way he puts colors together as examples of theories, seeing him arrange objects and flowers in his own choreography. The tapes were transcribed by Peggy Harrison, and audio-edited by Alice Lucas, who generously contributed her time to this tedious process. I then pulled in the sections of conversation from the reel-to-reel tapes that had been left off the cassette tapes when they stopped and added them in the appropriate spots in the manuscript. This work was typed by Laura Morland. All in all, approximately twenty-two hours of tape were used.

My first official meeting with Rudolph Schaeffer took place on Thursday, February 19, 1981, in the morning. It was simple and direct. We just plunged in. The man was so easy to lure back into those early farm days in Michigan that we only had about a half hour of "planning." Thursday mornings became our time for interviews, which sometimes expanded into the early afternoon. We met weekly unless there was a trip or a vacation or some interruption. Overall, we made eleven interviews which extended our meetings into June.

Rudolph Schaeffer's cottage is located at his school, The Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design, at the corner of Mariposa and Utah Street on Potrero Hill in San Francisco. There, up a long staircase, past the entrance to the school, and through the garden, is the glass door of his house. His grand piano is the most noticeable piece of furniture, one which has been with him since before the St. Anne Street school days. On the walls are paintings and a Chinese scroll and block prints; on tables and bookcases are carefully-placed Chinese ceramic sculptures, and always a new flower arrangement, even if only one bright orange nasturtium. The walls are painted Rudolph's "thinking" color, a light yellow-green, a color often worn by Rudolph as well.

On some days we would end our visit by walking through a new series of arrangements of flowers and sculpture in the gallery or by having lunch under a large white Italian canvas parasol in the garden. One of those days I asked Rudolph about the design of the garden, and he described his technique of visualizing spaces. He imagined the gravel area (under the parasol) as a "room" set apart, off to one side the grass (another "room"), and the path ( a "hall"). The gravel circle was set off against the square of the garden room at the end of the gallery. And so another life lesson from Professor Schaeffer, this time delivered with lunch.

During a few sessions I used my camera, and made a portrait for the frontispiece with Rudolph seated behind his desk, a flower in a vase on one side, a Chinese philosopher in ceramic on the other. Another time I caught him at the piano, improvising. In the fall of 1981, I returned to photograph him teaching his Tuesday class.

The interviews were reviewed and edited by Rudolph Schaeffer during the fall of 1981. He took seriously the task of correcting and amplifying his statements so that the final history is a refined document on his life and work, with his own special stamp.

It has been a privilege to participate in the life of Rudolph Schaeffer, to learn from him, and to assist in transmitting his ideas to paper and to posterity.

Margaretta K. Mitchell  
Interviewer

Berkeley, California  
December, 1981



INTERVIEW 1: February 19, 1981

Childhood, Clare, Michigan

Mitchell: Let's begin at the beginning, Rudolph. Where and when were you born?

Schaeffer: Clare, Michigan, June 26, 1886.

Mitchell: Your father's name?

Schaeffer: Julius Schaeffer, born in Mecklenburg-Strelitz, northern Germany.

Mitchell: What was his occupation?

Schaeffer: As a young man in Germany he was trained as a miller, but he came to this country, I think when he was about twenty-seven, and married my mother who was at that time about eighteen. She was born in Williamsville, New York, right near Buffalo. Her name was Mary Hirzel. She was born of Alsace-Lorraine parents who spoke both German and French. And she was educated in a convent school. Although they were Lutherans, she went to a convent school and there she met my father, who had come--how he got to Williamsville, I don't know, it maybe is recorded somewhere in the Clare library but I don't know; the family history is all recorded in the hometown library.

Clare is where I established the Rudolph Schaeffer Children's Library last year. It sounds a little bit more pretentious than it was because I didn't build a new library for the children, or anything like that; it was just a portion of one end of the existing adult library, which is called the Garfield Memorial Library, but the children's part of it is the Rudolph Schaeffer Children's Library. I had the book plate made. (Didn't I send you a copy of the book plate? It's a little bit larger than the actual one.)

Should I tell you about the library?

Mitchell: Sure.

Schaeffer: I started it with a donation of \$2500 which I'd been saving for years, until it received a few more donations by others. So the initial fund has been raised now to about \$4000. I knew of three donations: one was my sister's friend, Mrs. Roberta Bicknell, who is 103 years old--I call to see her every time I go home--and then one of my nieces gave \$300, and another one \$150. I don't know who gave the rest of the donations.

Anyway, Clare was my home town. It seems that it was originally just a little Indian village--I don't know its name, but I think it's recorded somewhere in the library in Clare. My father told how he was at a meeting when they were going to rename the village--they couldn't pronounce the Indian name. So there was a hired girl--they called them hired girls in those days, not maids, you see--and the hired girl was from the County Clare in Ireland. She was listening to all of this discussion and she spoke up and said, "Why don't you call it Clare?" and so that's how the name of the town was called Clare.

The reason why my parents went there in the first place was that there was a man in Clare who wanted to start a grist mill, and he had heard about my father in Williamsville being a miller, so he went to Williamsville to persuade my father to come, which my father being an immigrant was glad to do, and Mother came too to this little village. Mother used to tell how the pigs roamed the streets. There were farms around--the land had been cleared and farmers were raising wheat and grain and hay, and they needed a flour mill, so he got my father to build and start this mill, the first grist mill in that area. My father had to go way down to Cleveland, as the records say, for the stones. He loaded the grinding stones on railroad flatcars and brought them all the way from Cleveland, Ohio, up to Clare, Michigan. My father never told me that story, but I read about it afterwards in the library.

He told us about his building the grist mill. The flour didn't agree with him, the dust of the flour, and so the doctor said, "Oh, Julius, you better buy a farm and get out in the country, get in the woods, get out in the fresh air," which of course he did. He didn't know anything about farming, not a thing, and had to learn the hard way. So he and Mother had a rather tough time in those early days until later, much later. And then my brother, who was four years older than I was, always helped my father in the fields.

### Mother, Artistic Influences

Schaeffer: I helped my mother in the house. We couldn't afford a maid, but I helped her wash the dishes and cook and keep the house and all that. Perhaps that is why today my interests center around the home and why later I became so interested in interior design and things pertaining to the interior. My mother and I used to sit (when we had a little time) and remodel the interior of the farmhouse. It's a very nice, plain, old Victorian house with a two-story upright with a bay window and a wing, and then another one-story upright, and it had a beautiful commanding view. But at first, in order to build the house, my father had to clear an area of the primeval pines.

In my childhood, as I was growing up, my mother and I used to sit and reorganize, rebuild it inside. The stairway was enclosed; you opened the door and you went up a stairway with narrow walls on both sides. Well, we sat there and saw how we could take this south wall out and have the stairs come down in the parlor, so that you'd see the open stairway--that was when I was nine or ten years old. An early start in interior design!

Mitchell: Did your mother ever get to do any of that?

Schaeffer: Oh, no.

I think my mother would have been an artist or designer if she had had the opportunity. The pies that she used to make I remember. You know, the top cover of the pie, she had a way of going around the edge so it looked just like a twisted rope going around the edge. Then before baking, she took her pointed knife and she made a beautiful curved line in the top crust for the stem of the leaf, and then she'd poke the knife in to make the little leaves. And then when it was baked it would open up a little bit and it was just charming, like a curving fern leaf. She did it spontaneously, she just went zip, zip, zip. [laughs] I remember seeing her do it. It's singular that I should remember that. Later I learned to do that with a Chinese brush.

There are lots of seemingly unimportant little things that I remember so vividly of my childhood, but other things, how I felt about this or that, impressions, I don't recall at all. I spent my first twenty years on that farm. I have a nice picture of it somewhere, aerial picture too, and I've mislaid it, I can't find it. There are members of the family--my niece's family--that still live in the old farmhouse, but not by the name of Schaeffer. My niece herself lives in a trailer court nearby where I usually stay when visiting Clare.

Education, Transition from German to English

Mitchell: Were you educated in a one-room schoolhouse?

Schaeffer: When I first went to school it was in Clare, in a two-story building on Main Street and it was built for some other purpose. And then later they built a nice big, brick high school and grade school, way back about 1900. Then that school burned and they had to rebuild it, and that's where I graduated. The south boundary line of the farm was the north boundary line of the town limits, so it was just a short mile to go down to the school.

[pause to adjust hearing aid] I can't understand even with my hearing aid on if they talk down in their necktie or way back in their throat, they don't throw their voice out.

Mitchell: You enunciate well.

Schaeffer: Well, I didn't get that from [home], because I couldn't speak English before I went to kindergarten. We spoke German at home, just like the Chinese do, they speak Chinese at home. When we came home, we would speak English and our parents would answer in German, or they would speak to us in German and we'd answer in English, because we were learning English in school. Then pretty soon, my mother and father were both speaking English. But when Mother and Father conversed by themselves, they spoke German. My father never got to speak without an accent, but my mother you couldn't tell was German by her speech. Of course, she was born in this country. My father never could pronounce "th;" it was always "d." I was Ruti, instead of Rudi, to him.

The Pleasures of "Interior Decorating"

Mitchell: We were talking about your life on the farm when you were very, very young and you were remembering wonderful stories. Do you want to tell some more?

Schaeffer: I just remember so many incidents when I would be at home. On Saturdays my mother always liked to go down to do what she called "trading." She would take her butter and eggs and dressed chickens and all those things that she had on the farm, and we had a what we called a little buggy. You know what a buggy is? A little four-wheel carriage with one horse hitched to it that was the inspiration of that poem "The One-Horse Shay?" Coffee was



Schaeffer: fifteen cents a pound then, Lion brand coffee, good coffee, fifteen cents a pound, and a loaf of the baker's bread, five cents. And she would trade her butter and various things for the different staples and things that were necessary for the kitchen.

We'd usually expect the minister, Reverend Menke, who would come from Saginaw, Michigan about every two or three weeks to hold services in the Lutheran church, of which my mother and father were early founders, and so the house had to always be very slicked up and the kitchen floor scrubbed and fresh rag rugs put down. Everything had to be tidy if we were going to have company. I would love to take the things out of the parlor, the front room, which was always used just for company. (Then you had a middle room, where we really had a living room, all-purpose room even in those days, and then the next room was the kitchen which was then sort of a lean-to. Later the one-story upright was built.) But I used to love to take everything out of the parlor, except that I could hardly move the old organ. (You saw it here, I think. I moved it into the closet temporarily; I had it sent out here from Michigan. It had a big fancy top on it, mirrors and a place for music storage.) If the organ was across this corner, well, I would like to move it over against that wall. I moved it around and changed the furniture.

One time my mother had just gotten some new lace curtains, new, very plain ones. I remember the old Battenberg-like ones, they were very fancy and I remember too the green wallpaper with its green squiggles and scrolls--[interrupted by noise]

Mitchell: So there you were moving furniture around?

Schaeffer: Yes, and she had gotten these new net curtains. We had been out in the woods a few days before, and I'd gathered beech leaves. Do you know what shape a beech leaf has? It's oval, with a sharp point, and a serrated edge, and a little stem. Well, I don't know where I got this idea, but it just came to me how nice they would look in that lace curtain, see, so I poked the point into one opening in the net and then the stem in the other below, so I made a pattern all over the curtain. I couldn't have been more than nine or ten years old, I'm sure. There was the bay window, I didn't get to that, really, just the front curtain as I remember, facing the road.

After I got it done, I wondered why I was doing it. I was kind of a mischievous kid, too. I think it was mischievous to do this, because I could have poked a hole in Mother's lace curtain by putting that stem in the net. And I was a little bit apprehensive when I got it all done. When Ma came home--we always

Schaeffer: called our parents "Ma" and "Pa"--when Ma came home, she always wanted to see what I'd done, and she was always interested. (She didn't have time to do these things herself but she would have loved to do them herself.) I was a little bit scared, but when she looked in and saw that curtain, she said, "Oh, Rudy, how pretty!" My apprehension changed to joy. I remember that was an emotional--you know, you always remember emotional experiences, and that was an emotional experience.

Mitchell: She was a good mother.

Schaeffer: She always liked things I did and encouraged me to do things. I remember there was a lady down in Clare who would take a bottle or a jar, maybe a mustard pot or something like that, and she had some kind of colored clay that had salt in it, seemed to sparkle a little bit. (They have something like that now. Prang puts it out.) Who this woman was, I don't know, but Mother had me take lessons from her, see?

I'd model from this material little flowers and leaves, and very much like I see now in the Chinese ceramics--I'll show you a little Chinese dog. You take this little chunk and you roll it up and make a little string and you make a little coil or something. The Chinese did it with their Fatsan ware, with great skill and great artistry. I made little flowers. I'd make a little roll, little ball of clay, press my thumb in it, and that would make a petal for a flower and then I'd carve out some leaves.

### Family Values

Schaeffer: All of that was a foundation of what I was going to be interested in later.

Mitchell: How did your father feel about that?

Schaeffer: Oh, "Dat Rutty, always got his nose in a book, always doing something fancy, his nose in a book," but he didn't ridicule it, it was just because I was different than Julie [Julius].

Julie was my older brother and Julie liked to go hunting and catch rabbits and set a snare so that when the rabbit would go along his trail he would choke to death. Horrors! My brother liked to go hunting and shooting with my father. My father had an old Civil War musket that he would hunt deer with. I don't know what became...I think my grandnephew still has that musket. But I liked to be in the house. [laughs] Maybe at that time, maybe they called me a "sissy," I don't know.

Schaeffer:

What I learned from my father--because he wasn't trained and had no experience as a farmer, he was trained as a miller--what I learned from him was, I think, steadfastness, perseverance over great difficulties, and from my mother was that encouragement of making things.

Oh, I remember one time, she got this nice new sewing machine. I don't remember the old one; the new one was a Singer. It was like a cabinet, with two drawers in front, and had a green felt top and a little border. Oh! I see it right now, it just comes to me. A black and gold border about half an inch wide all around that felt and then there was a kind of back to it, about this high, and it came around on the sides. That always sat near the front, next to the door, on the wall space next to the door.

My mother had a milk glass tray or dish, and she wove some ribbon in between the filigree. Calling cards were put in there. My mother had close contact with the ladies down in the village, and they'd all have calling cards, they'd put them in that. And my father thought that my mother had to have the things that the more well-to-do people had in the town, because they had quite a struggle on the farm, in those early days. In the panic of 1890 or something, you know, everything fell to pieces.

When my father went away on business, or on some errand, he was off to Saginaw--which was the big city, you see, nearby. (That's where the airport is now. When you go to Clare you have to fly to the airport which serves Saginaw and Midland and Bay City. Those three cities. Midland is where the Dow Chemical Company is. And Clare was just thirty miles from there, north.) So he brought [back from a business trip] this lovely paisley shawl--because all the fair ladies, when they went to church, they had their paisley shawls, so my mother had one too. Well, she wore that paisley shawl for years, I think. Now I have it, I have it here. Sometime I'll show it to you.

When I came out to California and came back and visited my mother, they had moved off the farm--my brother had taken over the farm--and they moved into a little house down in Clare. And she had kept the organ. I had been studying modern design, simple lines, influenced by Macintosh, the Scottish architect, and the Vienna workshops. And I said, "Mother, do you like that [organ] top?" "No," she said. "It's too fancy."

Schaeffer: So what I did, I took it off, stored it in the woodshed somewhere among the greenery, and hung the paisley shawl up behind it, from the ceiling down behind it. And in the center, just where the organ came, was this dark black area. Looked like design. You know, in the paisley sometimes there's a center that's a kind of a soft black, and then the design, all these swirling lines-- you know the paisley design? Well, it was just beautiful. My mother loved it.

And I said to my mother, "You know, that table there beside the front door is just too high. It would be much nicer if it was low." She said, "What can you do about it?" I said, "Well, I can saw off a piece of the legs." [chuckles] She always went with my ideas. This was much later in my life, you see, when I was out in California.

Well, I have such pleasant memories, and you can see why. And I appreciated my childhood on the farm. That's why I want to do something.

Mitchell: For the children, you mean.

Schaeffer: For the children's library. In their memory. But I included my brother and sister too, in it, because their children, my nieces and nephews, will want to help support it, too.

### Siblings

Mitchell: Let's talk about when you were small. Where were you in your family? Were you the first, the second? What was the sequence of your family?

Schaeffer: The first child was a year old, born in the village before when my father was with the mill, Charlie. He died when he was a year. The second one was Alice, and she died when she was a few weeks old, because they'd moved from Clare out to the country place and my mother said she used to oftentimes cry because she didn't see any neighbors and she was alone, alone. She was a beautiful bride of eighteen when she married. I always told my brother, Julie, I wish we'd been good-looking like our mother and father were. Then my sister came along, Emma Henrietta, and then my brother. My sister was eight years older and my brother was four years older. And then I came along.

Mitchell: You were the baby?



Schaeffer: I was the baby for a while, for seven years, and then there was another one, Albert, and he died when he was seven years old and I was fourteen. According to the knowledge doctors have now, he'd be living today, my younger brother; he simply had peritonitis.

Mitchell: From a ruptured appendix?

Schaeffer: Something that could have been taken care of, but they had two doctors and they fought over what they should do, and we always blamed it on the fact that the doctors could not agree. We really spoiled him. [laughs] He was such a dear child, and when he was very little--I have a picture of him--he had long curls.

### Dressed For School

Schaeffer: You saw my picture in here of when I was five? [shows an album]

Mitchell: You were adorable. Were you dressed as children were dressed, in dresses?

Schaeffer: Yes, I was dressed, there I am, and what's significant to me today is that I was holding a flower.

Mitchell: And you had a beautiful bow at your neck.

Schaeffer: Yes, and button shoes. I remember one time starting out to go downtown with my mother and I had the right shoe on the left foot --they always bought things a little bit larger, as we were growing so fast--I had one shoe on, with the buttons on the wrong side, had the right shoe on the left foot and my mother noticed it when we started off, and didn't I get a spanking for that!

Mitchell: Were flowers an important part of your childhood?

Schaeffer: Yes, always from childhood up, after school, my school chums, girls and boys, mostly girls, because the boys went out playing ball, we went what we called "flowering." We were picking wild flowers. Then when I'd bring them home, my mother would say, "Rudy, you fix the flowers." They weren't "arrangements;" that I didn't learn or know anything about till I came to California. It was always "fixing the flowers."

Mitchell: Just a little bit more away back there with your family. Your mother's education, what kind of an education had she had?

Schaeffer: I imagine high school, and maybe after high school, I don't know, I never got the--but she always was able to write well and speak well.

Mitchell: What age did you actually start to go to school?

Schaeffer: Oh, I went to school when I was four. I think so. I was four years old, or maybe five, about the time I had that picture taken. I had short pants to go to school, and a waist with ruffles, two rows of ruffles, and cuffs with ruffles. Just short pants and long socks. My grandmother used to scold us because we would wear out the knees of our socks and she had to darn them. They didn't always have ruffles; some of the more dressy had corduroy, like little Fauntleroy.

Mitchell: There must have been an endless amount of work on the farm for all of you. What was it like to live on a farm?

Schaeffer: I had my definite chores. My brother had to stop schooling from the eighth grade to help my father. I was allowed to go to school and graduate. Four years ago, we went to the alumni reunion and there was one lady who graduated with me there.

Mitchell: You and she were the same age?

Schaeffer: She was the same age. She's passed on now. But there were only four of us who graduated from high school that year, and I have a picture somewhere of my graduation.

Mitchell: Here's your graduation picture.

Schaeffer: No, that's the confirmation picture. That's when I was fourteen.

Mitchell: You don't look like a high school graduate here.

Schaeffer: No, I was too young.

Mitchell: So there were four of you graduating from high school, from your class?

Schaeffer: Yes. Marie Tatman, Nina Eberhart, and John Shaw. See, I remember them!

Rudy and His Brother Julie

Mitchell: Well, back there on the farm, you all must have had to work tremendously hard.

Schaeffer: My brother did, but it was easier for me because I helped my mother. We had one of those big ranges--like up in the country I have one, with the top on it, the old-fashioned ranges and I think they're still made today, and there was a reservoir for hot water on the side. My mother always called, "Rudy, fill the 'resevoy,'"--I had to keep that full of water, and the woodbox full of wood. Another duty, I had to take care of the chickens, clean the chicken coop, gather the eggs, and feed the chickens. That was Rudy's job.

I was Rudy, and my brother was Julie, and it wasn't Julie and Rudy, it was Rudy and Julie. Where one was, the other was. There was four years difference, but we were always together in spirit. Right up until he passed away, I'd go home and we'd spend hours talking. I wish I had had a tape recorder, all the things we used to talk about, of what I remembered and what he remembered. He was older and there were a lot of things that he knew that I didn't know.

Mitchell: You were good friends as brothers?

Schaeffer: Always. He was my protector. He didn't go to school after the 8th grade, and when I was coming along four years later in the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th, he oftentimes came clear down past the bridge to being me safely home, because I'd be meeting the town Irish kids.

I would stay after school and do art work for the teacher. I'll have to tell you about that. I'd be coming home. See, there was a little river, a little bit bigger than a creek, where we all used to go swimming, the swimming hole. All the kids after school, the boys would go down to go swimming and by the time they had this swim and were coming home to town, I would just be coming home from putting the program on the blackboard for the teacher.

### Morning Glory Colors

Schaeffer: I was telling my class the other day that one of the first things I learned to draw was birds. But really, the first thing was morning glories. I can draw it today, just the way I did then. I would start along the upper part of the blackboard, and the teacher would give me a box of colored chalk, and I started with the leaf. Then there was a morning glory that grew this way and then one above moved this way, and then there was this scroll with the leaf on it, and then there was another group, and another, et cetera. I remember drawing with chalk, yellow morning glories. I had all the different colors so they had to be all different colors. Of course there are no yellow morning glories, did you know that?

Mitchell: They're blue, aren't they?

Schaeffer: Blue and bluish red. Years later I discovered from somewhere, I don't know where, that any natural species of a flower like morning glories, like marigolds, like roses--what are the three primary pigments? Red, blue and yellow. Any species of flower has only two of those, but not the third, unless they've been tampered with, like they're trying to make blue roses. There are yellow roses, red roses, and of course white roses, all the shades of red, but no blue roses, see? The same way with nasturtiums, the same way, see? Morning glories have blue and red, but no yellow. That I discovered later. But when I was in the fifth grade, ten years old, I made yellow morning glories.

Mitchell: Were those Irish boys mean?

Schaeffer: Oh, the Irish. And if my brother didn't meet me--I remember one time he didn't meet me and I had to go through a swamp, the road led through a swamp. Now that's all filled in, and all suburban houses, nice houses, but this was a swamp. I got mired into the mud and it was mud clear up to my hips. I was hiding off the road. When I got home, I think I got a whipping too.

### More Scenes of Childhood

Mitchell: You also were telling me that you kept the woodbox filled, and that you helped your mother in the house, but you must also have participated in some of the farm outdoor chores. What I keep envisioning in my mind, only in an American version, is that wonderful film, Tree of the Wooden Clogs. I keep seeing that grey sky and I keep seeing you walking around as a little boy.



Schaeffer: Oh yes, that [movie] reminded me of my childhood days. Only it was so different. It was European and we were already Americans.

Mitchell: And I think your Victorian house had a cheerful atmosphere.

Schaeffer: And I remember that movie reminded me of my childhood.

Mitchell: Did they slaughter the animals that way? [as in the film]

Schaeffer: Away from the house we had what was called the slaughterhouse. There were two meat markets in town, and they slaughtered all their beef and their pigs. Pigs and cows and whatever, they slaughtered there. My father had pigs you see, fed on the refuse. We didn't have to buy feed or raise feed for them, that was their food. Kind of gruesome, but that's the way pork oftentimes is. I think that's one of the reasons why the Jewish people don't eat pork, it's not considered clean.

Mitchell: Well, today you're a vegetarian, aren't you?

Schaeffer: I'm more or less a vegetarian. I eat fish. I eat, once in a while, chicken. When I eat chicken or any kind of meat, I want it so it doesn't look--I don't like the way the Chinese bring in a fish with the head on it and the eyes and everything else. Some of our farm friends, when they'd have a big dinner, they'd have a little stuffed pig, a whole pig and onions in the eyes, yuk. However, I like the way the Chinese serve meat in bite-size pieces, and pick it up with chopsticks. Do you use chopsticks? I used to, I can play [it on] the piano all right, but when it comes to picking up things...

Mitchell: What about music in your education? Was that organ yours?

Schaeffer: The organ was delivered to my house, to our home on my sixth birthday, 1892, and evidently it was for my birthday. My brother wasn't interested in music.

My brother was a little different temperament. We complemented each other and he had a great sense of humor, he always did have. I made a pie one time, and just for fun, he said it was so tough that he took it out on the porch. There was a hook, and he put the pie on the hook and it hung there. In more recent years he told that at the Rotary Club, and also told how he was teaching me how to milk a cow. I was so long in milking the cow and dilly dally and all, and squirting the cow's milk into the cat's mouth, he said the cow got tired of waiting for me to finish milking and walked over in the other corner to lie down in the barnyard.

Schaeffer: Well, I made a rebuttal to that, at the Rotary Club, where he took me that day. I said he needn't brag. He has his barn; his cows are milked to music, by milking machines. My brother had a dairy, later. Before the homogenizing, he used to furnish all the raw milk for the babies in Clare. Then later they had much more strict rules. But he always kept his barn immaculate for the cows.

Mitchell: So you and he really got along very well?

Schaeffer: Oh, yes.

### Sister Emma Henrietta

Schaeffer: I didn't know my sister very well till later years.

My grandmother on my mother's side, Grandma Hirzel, who always mended our socks, became very ill. She had a goiter. My aunt, my mother's younger sister, needed help to take care of her. They couldn't afford a nurse. (Very few people can afford a nurse even today, to come into the home.) So my sister stayed out of high school and went to help my aunt to take care of my grandmother.

My grandmother died and so my aunt and uncle came from Wisconsin to the funeral and all the Hirzel family. My Aunt Rose said to my sister, "Now you've been out of high school and you really need a rest. You come to northern Wisconsin, come home with us, and have a rest." So she did, and she started in high school up there. I was twelve years old at the time. She got interested in high school, taught for a couple of years, and then married. She only came home to visit. That's the only time I've ever seen my sister during those early years. Until later, I would go and visit her up at her home in the summers.

Mitchell: Was that hard on your mother?

Schaeffer: I imagine it was very hard on my mother.

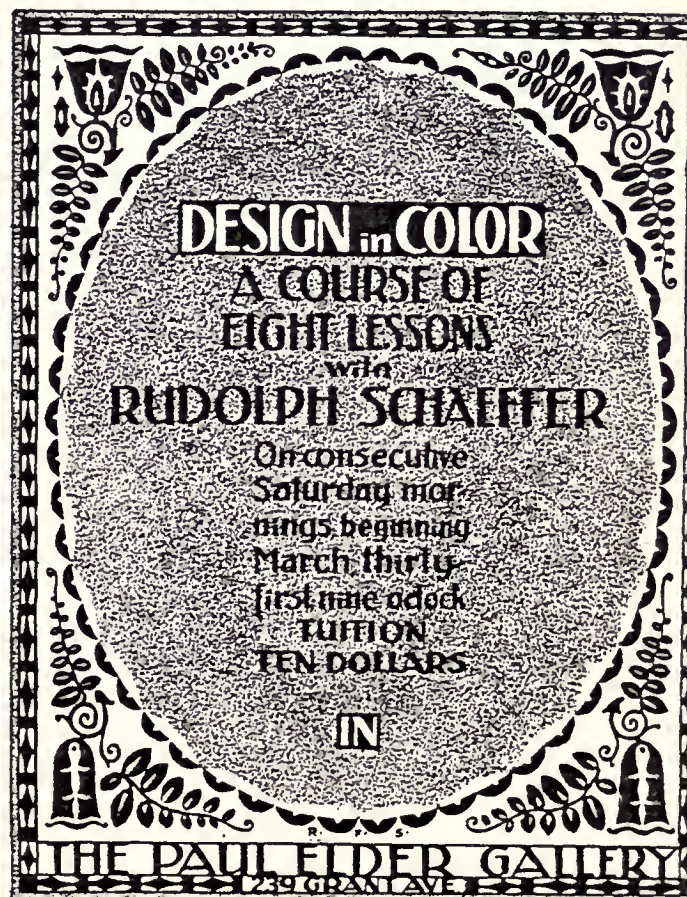
Mitchell: But you were much younger?

Schaeffer: Yes, and then when the little seven year old died, that was a blow. My mother had a hard time getting over that. So then she turned more to me, you see. When I went off to teach, she came and spent the whole winter with me in Columbus, Ohio. She came out here and spent a whole winter with me out here. And one winter my mother and father came.

- Schaeffer: You know what interests me is the [continuity] of events from the time I was a child till the present day, how many events seem to me make a unity in the pattern of my life, which I feel isn't true with a lot of people that I know, for they'd switch from one thing to another.
- Mitchell: We'll have to start on that theme next week. That's an interesting theme, that could tie everything together.
- Schaeffer: Everything ties together, you know? Maybe we can talk about it too. I followed the pattern that my intuition outlined. Follow what your heart says, and the mind will work it out. Sometime I'll dig up a Christmas card. Every year for several years I wrote a little philosophical squib. That was one of them. I don't know if I can remember this, but "Listen, listen to the yearning heart..." Oh no, I can't say it now.
- Mitchell: Let's start on that idea next week. I think this is a good place to stop.











INTERVIEW 2: February 26, 1981

High School Days

Mitchell: Let's go back to the period of high school. Perhaps you could start off by describing what it looked like, the countryside, your relationship to the natural world.

Schaeffer: Well, of course now the area of central Michigan and northern Michigan is like a great, well-groomed park, with farmhouses and farm barns scattered here and there, over cultivated fields and second growth forests. And it really looks like a well-groomed park. In the early pioneer days, when the farmyards were cluttered up with debris, worn-out implements and the pine stumps... I grew up in that era right after the lumbering had been done in our community. When a fire would sweep across to burn the brush, to clear the land, it left all those blackened stumps. That was the countryside around my father's farm, and on my father's farm.

Mitchell: Did your father actually build the house? Do you remember that?

Schaeffer: He helped. I came along a bit later. I think maybe my sister would have remembered. No, she was born there, too.

Mitchell: When you were in high school and you were going back and forth to town, to school...

Schaeffer: Oh yes, I had to hide in the swamp, you see, because I stayed to put decorations on the wall. I told you about the morning glories. The other kids thought I was teacher's pet. Maybe I was, I don't know. But even in high school we had art. A teacher came over from Mt. Pleasant, from the State Normal Training School for Teachers, and gave a course in drawing, in art. I remember making a moonlight scene on the water. I remember that. And then I was to be a senior that following year and I was so

Schaeffer: intrigued by the teaching of art that I went over to Mt. Pleasant for the summer session and took a course in art. I think that was in my junior year. Then it might have been the summer I graduated I went to Mt. Pleasant and took another course in art. That's when I started my art career.

Mitchell: What kind of a course was it?

Schaeffer: There were lectures on art, and it was so long ago I don't remember, but it all had an art flavor anyway. I didn't keep any records of that. Only I remember one time, when I was getting ready... I had to go on the train, only fifteen miles, but I had to get on the train because they had no automobiles in those days, there was nobody to take me but a horse and buggy. I remember I was pressing my trousers, and it took me longer than I thought, and I didn't get down to the train in time. I missed the train. And my father said, "Rudy, you must make calculations." I always remember that. "You must make calculations." You know, you remember things that if you've been in emotional strain, you remember that very much, you remember that very easily.

#### Summer Art Classes

Schaeffer: Anyway, I went to that summer school for two summers. It was a summer school for teachers, the last one. Art for teachers. See, it was a time when Prang was putting all art in the public schools. The Prang system of teaching art. At the turn of the century there was great art activity in the public schools. Art and manual arts and music. And that was the beginning. Those were the first beginnings of art and music in the public schools at that time, throughout the whole country. It coincided with the great wave of crafts, of Mission furniture, which was very simple furniture that most anybody could put together. Women were studying pottery, taking all kinds of craft courses, hand wrought jewelry, metalwork and batik, and I think weaving--I can't remember much weaving starting at that time, later that started. The United States crafts movement was parallel with the art nouveau of Europe.

I went two summers, then, before I graduated from this normal training summer school. But that was an indication that I was leaning towards a career in art. You see? Gravitating.

Well, I graduated from high school in 1904. Four of us, two boys and two girls, graduated that year. In 1974, just six years ago, I went back to Clare in time for the alumni meeting. And



Schaeffer: Nina Eberhart, who has since passed away, was married and had another name, Nina and I were at that alumni meeting. Our pictures were in the local paper. We were really the guests of honor, having graduated much earlier than any of the others there.

You were going to ask me something.

Mitchell: You have a good feeling about Clare, Michigan and where you grew up.

Schaeffer: I think of so many of my pupils who have been raised in high-rise buildings away from nature, way away from nature, have never had the contact with nature. And I lived on the farm in the middle of nature, and through the change of seasons and all. Although during those years it was a struggle for my father and mother, and us boys, because I think it was 1890 when what was called the Great Panic, and they had tough times. However, I had a very normal childhood. We always had lots of company and the house was always open. The latchstring was always out.

#### Family and Friends

Schaeffer: My brother and I, we'd get all our chores done in the morning, Saturday morning, then our chums from downtown, which was a short mile away, would come, and we'd have a grand time. You know? Playing in the barn and all that. Of course my brother was four years older.

And then we'd go hunting flowers in the springtime. Then when we'd come home all tired, and all this gang of kids, it would be about dinnertime, and I'd say, "Oh, can't you stay and have something to eat?" And my mother would whip up a cake and make some raw fried potatoes or something. Oh, it was no trouble at all. She could do it quickly. She was so experienced. And there would be this great...we'd put a few leaves in the table--we had one of those drop-leaf tables, with a round drop leaf at either end--and here would be all these kids sitting around having fun. Ma would open up a can of fruit. And it was all done spontaneously and quickly. Everybody chattering and we'd have a wonderful time. [chuckles] My brother and I, when we were little we'd always have our friends come up. They weren't chased home at dinnertime. On the farm there was always plenty to eat.

Mitchell: And of course, there wasn't a telephone to call their parents.

Schaeffer: Oh, no. No telephone yet. But the parents knew if they came up to the Schaeffers, they didn't know what time they were going to come back. Oh, there's something I just thought about then. It's gone now. Oh yes, understand we weren't poor, but we weren't rich, either. We were rich in everyday life. And I remember going to play downtown with some... it's funny how something like that has always stuck in my mind. I went to play with some kids down there, and I stayed for supper. When they set the table, I noticed there were chips out of the plates. See? I can remember. A good big chip out of my plate. And we never had that at home. If a plate was chipped as much as that, it might be chipped on the edge--I never saw a broken dish on the table. To this day any chips bother me in dishes. [chuckles] But I remember that so well. Why I should even think about that, I don't know.

Mitchell: You already had a sense of what is beautiful.

Schaeffer: And appropriate. But when I recall it now, it seems as though I was a little snooty. [laughs]

Well anyway, going back to the appearance of the landscape, too. Then they had invented a machine to pull stumps. Hover over the stump. Maybe the stumps would be several feet across. And they'd extract them out of the ground. Then they would take all the dirt out and they'd make a fence of those. Turn them up on their edges, and make a fence. A stump fence. The cattle couldn't possibly get through them.

In recent years I read in the paper where a man is out collecting those stumps. There are a few of them left throughout the country. And they'd collect them for driftwood. They'd put them in their front yard as a curiosity, because they seem to be of substance primeval, the first forest. Well, I don't know whether that's very interesting or not, but it's a different landscape now.

### Broken Wrist

Schaeffer: When I graduated from high school that summer, I was helping my father. The first summer when I graduated from high school, I went up to help my uncle in a store. He had a general merchandise store in Morristown, Michigan. While I was there the store caught on fire and burned. I saw the fire first, in the back of the store. I had the presence of mind to rush into the office and close the safe door. That I remember, and I got commended for it.

Schaeffer: And then when I went home--this was the year I graduated, 1904--because there was no more job, I then helped my father haul gravel. There was a team hitched to the wagon, with gravel. (We had a gravel pit.) I got down to the bridge and it was customary to unhitch the horses and drive them down off the highway and let them have a drink in the river, then bring them back and hitch them onto the wagon and cross the bridge. I was hauling gravel down to Clare. They were re-graveling the main street.

However, while I unhitched the horses--I stopped in front of the bridge--I started to get off and stepped on the wheel, to jump down to the ground. At that instant the horses started up and threw me on to the hard graveled road and broke this arm. That's why I can't turn my wrist. They didn't set it right.

In those days I hadn't thought about art. I just leaned that way. I wasn't consciously, I didn't even know--we didn't have any art in our acquaintance, we didn't know who artists were, really.

Mitchell: What about music? You had organ and piano lessons.

Schaeffer: That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a musician. You see, I'd been leaning towards music, too. I had this in mind, I remember this--oh, I had great visions! I'd heard of people going to Dresden to study music. And that was my ambition, to go to Dresden to study music. Then when I broke this wrist that dream changed, you see. And, well...these are just rather mundane things that I remember clearly.

Then I had to do something that fall. I already had gone down to the druggist and said, "Dr. Donlap, should I be a druggist? What should I be? What should I do?" He said, "Don't be a druggist. It's a slave's life. You're waking up at all hours of the night to find people that want a pill or something." Well, I put that out of my youthful mind.

### First Teaching Job

Schaeffer: Anyway, there was an opening for a teacher about seven miles away, in Dover, Michigan. Or near Dover. So I applied for that position. That was my first teaching. It was right near a great farm, and I remember the little room under the stairs that I had. I had mounted some bird pictures, on the part of the wall where the stairs came down and the wall was slanted. And I remember arranging them. I can see it today. Isn't that funny? I arranged these pictures in my little room that I had there. From childhood on, birds have fascinated me.

Schaeffer: Every Friday my brother would come for me with the horse and buggy and take me home and bring me back on Sunday afternoon. The little schoolhouse was right near where I boarded, the Cornwell Farm. It's still there, but the school isn't. My brother and I drove past the farm a few years ago. The little schoolhouse, as I remember, was about as big as this room here, and there were ten students, ten pupils, and they were all cousins, and their names were Ott. Excepting one, and that little girl's name was Fetch. And of course my brother had to make some wise-crack about it and say, "That's one girl to fetch all the other Otts." [laughs] Or something like that.

I remember teaching there, and making a map of the world, and putting the different products of all the countries on the map--well, as much as possible. Like Java. I remember just that, that little part of it, making a map and putting different things on the map which represented the exports of that country.

Mitchell: These were children of all different ages.

Schaeffer: All grades.

Mitchell: And you were seventeen.

Schaeffer: No, I was eighteen. I had just graduated from high school. But we didn't have many grades in this country school. They were much the same age. Not much difference in age. The next year, I got the best school in the county, eight grades, and right three miles from home. I walked, rain or shine, like the mailman, you know. There's only once I think I stayed at my father's sister's, an aunt from Germany, married to a farmer, and they lived on that interval of miles to the Randall School. I stayed there overnight. I remember the delicious liver sausage that we had for breakfast. I can't taste them yet. There's nothing like German homemade liver sausage.

Mitchell: You were there a year, at the second school?

Schaeffer: I was there a year. And sometimes these snowdrifts that I would have to go through, and the rain back and forth, those three miles weren't easy. But in nice weather it was lovely and I'd stop to pick wild flowers.

During that time I had taken lessons on the organ. I can't remember my teacher's name, but I had learned to read music. Different farm people had reed organs, so I went around on Saturday on a bicycle and taught some of the kids how to play. For half an hour I got the big sum of twenty-five cents. And for a whole hour, fifty cents. You see? And that's the way I earned a little money--a lot in those days!



Schaeffer: I was getting paid \$28 a month. At the first school it was \$15 a month. I paid very little for board and room. But \$28 was pretty good pay. And if I had stayed the next year, they were going to give me blackboards, all around the room, because I'd fill them up with drawings, you see, and I'd leave a few places on them for utility! But they promised to give me blackboards all around the room. And they offered me \$30 a month. Wow!

### Decision to Go to Thomas Normal Training School

Mitchell: But you didn't stay there. What did you do?

Schaeffer: That last Christmas, my teacher who was my 5th grade teacher when I was in the 5th grade, was visiting Clare at Christmastime and we were skating with a big crowd on the mill pond, and there was a big campfire for light. How romantic, huh? But she was the one I had put the decorations on the wall for. And she was the one that spanked me, too. Because one of the chaps sitting in front of me put his hand on the back on the writing part of my desk. And he had his head down this way, dozing maybe. And I stuck a pin through his little fingernail. Just for sheer deviltry. He yelled out bloody murder. I got a paddling for that, believe me.

Anyway, in the meantime, this 5th grade teacher had gone to the Thomas Normal Training School in Detroit. The school then was not only for art and manual arts, but also for music. Music and arts. Instituted by a Mrs. Thomas, who was the arts supervisor in Detroit. (If I got to Detroit again I'm going to see if I can look up those records to see who my teachers were, because I have a hunch... But I'm getting ahead of my story.)

She, my former teacher, had come back from Stamford, Connecticut, where she was a supervisor of music in the public schools. They'd just put music in. This was all a new era started. Turn of the century. I told her what I was doing. And she said, "Oh, Rudy!" (Everybody called me Rudy then. I hardly knew my name was Rudolph in those days. I knew it was officially Rudolph but nobody ever called me Rudolph.) And she said, "Rudy, this is the day of specialization. You're teaching kindergarten, 1st grade, right up to the 8th grade. All those grades! You must specialize!"

Well, I didn't know what specialization was. And she said, "Why don't you go to Thomas School where I did and specialize in art and manual training?" Of course that just opened a whole new

Schaeffer: vista in my life. My gracious, that was just like opening a great door and seeing a marvelous vision outside. Here I'd been cooped up in a little country town on a farm which I thought was the whole world, and loved it as the world.

Mitchell: And when she said that, you knew it was appropriate. You went there the following year?

Schaeffer: Much to my father's disappointment. Because here his son, this farmer's son, was going to get a \$2 raise next year. Thirty dollars a month! And I was teaching in the best school in the county, getting the highest salary of any teacher in the county. And he was proud of me. See? And all that was letting my father down. But I didn't have any money, hadn't saved any.

I'd extravagantly bought a piano [laughs], an upright piano! I was taking lessons. But before I got the piano I even was taking lessons and practiced at some friend of my mother's, Mrs. Lacey, practiced on their piano. Bless their hearts. I kept in touch with them all the years until they passed away. He passed away when he was ninety, and he was a little bit older than I was. They were young people. They're mentioned in the archives of the Clare library.

My father wouldn't think of giving me money for that venture. I had enough for my fare. And I went downtown and I remember going into Mr. Bicknell's store. (I just had a notice yesterday that his son passed away, his grandson, rather. His daughter was the lady who gave the \$500 to the children's library. A great friend of my sister's.) I went into Mr. Bicknell's store and I told him what I was going to do. I had in mind something new, a new shirt or something.

And he said, "Now Rudy, if you go to the city, be sure that even if your pants are threadbare, keep them pressed. Be neat and tidy. Keep your pants pressed, hair combed, and don't go around with baggy pants on." Because nobody pressed their pants in the country in those days. But he had been to the city! How I remember that! I remember him telling me as if it were just yesterday.

And so off I went to the city without any money, maybe just a few dollars in my pocket. My father wouldn't loan me any. He was so upset, he was so terribly upset! But my mother said, "You go. I'll send you something each week out of my marketing money." So she'd send me a little money, maybe a cornbread, which we called Johnnycake in those days, almost every week. And I would buy a package of graham crackers and some powdered chocolate, and with the hot water from the faucet in my room I'd make chocolate and graham crackers for breakfast.

Schaeffer: I remember there was three or four blocks away from the school a place where I could get a fifteen cent lunch. It was a very good lunch for fifteen cents. I would walk into downtown and I remember there being an Italian restaurant, and he served a very nice soup. On the middle of the table was a basket of rolls. I'd fill up on soup and rolls. Every once in a while I'd be invited out for dinner. There were friends of Clare people there who would invite me to dinner. That's how I got along. I might have had other means of eating, but I remember those places. Anyway, I didn't starve--only hungry.

Then for my tuition they were very kind. They let me take care of a wood stove and sweep the floor of the drawing room. The school moved during the holidays. And when I went back from vacationing at home, they were on Grandview Boulevard, I think, in Detroit. And there they gave me the job of tending the furnace, on Sunday night going down in the basement and turning on the furnace for Monday morning. Then for a little money on Saturdays I remember several things. Two things remain on my mind: one, I had a job in a shoe store fitting babies and children's shoes; and another Saturday afternoon and Saturday evening job, I tended a shooting gallery, like there used to be here on Market Street. You know those shooting galleries, with a moving line of ducks, I managed that. I always had to do something, because I was raised on a farm to do things, you see.

#### Rudy and Julie at Home

Schaeffer: I remember once--the year of a fair in Buffalo, a world's fair, or something, my father and mother went to Buffalo and my brother and I were left home to take care of the chickens and the cows and everything. And what did we do but we dressed the chickens, we made butter, and took eggs, all this, and went down to the town, and instead of getting groceries for them, we got money for them. And we went to the circus! We had money to spend! We had a great time.

I don't know what my folks said about it when they got home. If we got whipped, I think I would have deserved it. Anyway we had a great time. The circus was in town, we didn't have to carry water for the elephants that time, we had money to go in in grand style.

Well now, where was I?

Mitchell: We're back in Thomas Normal School and you're a wonderfully hardworking student, trying to make enough to stay there.

Back Home for Christmas

Schaeffer: Then I went back at Christmastime. When I came home I sat down to the table and I looked at that sugar bowl for the first time in my life. My mother had one of those glass-covered bowls, hobnail decoration on it all over, Early American glass. And I looked at that for the first time in my life. I had dipped sugar out of it ever since I could remember. My mother always had a cannister on the table, too, with vinegar and other bottles in it, three in all, a silver cannister. After a meal she just threw a white cloth over it.

Well, the reason I noticed that sugar bowl is because I was studying design, becoming more consciously visually aware; looking at shapes, looking at design. And this had a diamond-shaped design on it. To this day, visual awareness is a course in the school\* curriculum.

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\*Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design



INTERVIEW 3: March 12, 1981

Arts and Crafts Movement: Influence of Morris, Hoffman, Macintosh

Schaeffer: When I was ready to teach and was prepared to teach, that was the beginning of this whole world aesthetic movement. In Europe it started as the art nouveau in France, and then we had Morris in England, William Morris and the Scottish architect, [Charles Rennie] Macintosh. William Morris had visited Vienna. I read in one of the old magazines that while in Vienna, he influenced Joseph Hoffman, the famous Viennese architect. But he [William Morris] was, as far as history is concerned, the spark of the great modern art movement in Europe.

I don't know what sparked the movement in this country especially. Possibly William Morris. When Stickney, the noted craft furniture maker, made the craftsman furniture, he called his armchair the Morris chair. So right at this time it seems that Morris was the inspiration for Stickney, and also Batchelder and this whole craft movement.

In Boston, ladies, housewives, were taking up woodwork and pottery, stitchery and various handicrafts.

Mitchell: Can you make a connection between the involvement with women in the arts, and this whole arts and crafts movement?

Schaeffer: I wonder if it's this: if it wasn't a birth in the consciousness of women everywhere at that time, a need for a more individual creative life, more than keeping house and raising a family. It would be a historian's job to figure out just when this movement started. It's like in Europe a century or more earlier, when there was a spiritual need for music, that brought the great musicians, Beethoven, Handel, and all the great and less great musicians. There must have been some psychological or spiritual urge that brought a love of music into being. Perhaps some cosmic reason.

Mitchell: What did you feel yourself at the time of the great craft and cultural movement?

Schaeffer: Well it's very difficult for me to say, because I didn't have, like now, a historical frame of reference, you see. I was just an integral part of it in my minuscule way.

Mitchell: Why do you suppose art was valued in the culture then?

Schaeffer: There was that movement in England of Ruskin, Macintosh, Morris, Burne-Jones, the painter, and there's William Blake. A new area of consciousness was stirring. Then in this country, what about the poetry of Emerson and Longfellow, you see? Walt Whitman.

Mitchell: They call that period the American Renaissance.

Schaeffer: The consciousness of people, where people of awareness were searching for creative individual expression. Especially in Europe.

With this significant movement, another movement somewhat earlier came into being, the appreciation and love of nature. Rousseau was perhaps the great prophet in getting people to look at nature. In Europe, at that time, when people went on a trip they'd go in a carriage with all the curtains drawn, and at night they'd always have to shut all the windows, shut out the night air. It was a new birth. I think maybe that's part of the renaissance, I don't know. I haven't been much of a scholar along those lines.

Now let's see what Schaeffer's been doing.

Mitchell: Exactly. But my point is that you participated in this expression and so you were there.

Schaeffer: Yes, just like young people today. Few have much knowledge of the past as a frame of reference but they're participating like I was.

I have to be more reflective now and recall as much as I can remember, how I happened to do all this.

Mitchell: I think it's doubly important, Rudolph, because this is a period where we are again seeking a new expression. So the lessons from the period that you moved in as a young man I think are very relevant to where the young people are today.

Schaeffer: As I look back, I had an inner motivation which my environment, in the world around, supported. Take for instance as a child on the farm in Michigan, as I told you, my mother was always interested in my making things, and "making pretty things," as she said, and doing things with the hands, and arranging flowers, and gathering flowers on walks over fields and through the woods, and all of that. It seems as though I came into the world, just at that particular time, an auspicious time. Not earlier or later, just at the right time--my destiny.

Chosen to Go to Munich, Germany

Mitchell: Let's take you to the Throop Institute. You were invited, but start telling me the story of going to California.

Schaeffer: Well, I think I mentioned that I took a summer course with [E.A.] Batchelder in Minneapolis. I must have impressed him with my work, for he invited me to come to California. I didn't answer him right away. The more I thought of it, the more I wanted to go to California. This was a great adventure. Then you see I came to the Throop Polytechnic Elementary School in Pasadena. I think I told you I continued to study privately with Batchelder.

Well, the late summer of 1910 I started at the Throop Polytechnic Elementary School. I was there during 1911, 1912 and 1913--when I bought the German piano, the Ritter.

I think along in perhaps January or February, this scout came from the United States Commission of Education, by the name of Claxton. He was an exponent of the arts and crafts in the school. We were in the beginning of an industrial age about this time. In Europe, Germany especially, tradesmen taught in the public schools especially in Munich. Claxton was very much aware of what was going on in Europe and sent a scout to find twenty-five manual arts teachers to go to Munich to investigate crafts in the public schools, industrial schools, and trade schools. Claxton felt that art should be brought more into trade schools as well as the regular public schools. By the way, in the school of dentistry in Munich, the students had to learn color theory so that they could match teeth. [laughter]

So this is why United States Commissioner of Education Claxton sent a scout out around through the country, from east and west and south and north. The reason they visited California evidently, as I see it now, is because the Throop Institute, now California Institute of Technology, was quite famous at that time, you see?

Mitchell: What did it stand for?

Schaeffer: It was a school for arts and crafts, and Ernest Batchelder was the director, I think,

Mitchell: Was it unusual at the time?

Schaeffer: Yes, it was the new thing, a part of the great arts and crafts movement of the time.

### Throop Elementary School

Schaeffer: Throop was a very rich man in Pasadena. He also founded Throop Polytechnic High School, and Throop Polytechnic Elementary School, a school from the 4th through 8th. I taught manual training to the 7th and 8th grade students. Betty Gronendyke, a charming lady, much older than I, took me under her motherly wing. She taught the arts and crafts in the 5th and 6th grades. Then I continued with them at the 7th and 8th grade levels.

Mitchell: What did the students learn exactly, Rudolph? If someone had never heard of this, how would you describe what the students did during the day?

Schaeffer: My students? Gracious, why didn't I bring the pictures?

Mitchell: Describe them a little bit and we'll gather them next time.

Schaeffer: Well, of course I have learned things about teaching that I didn't know then, and learned afterwards, but I designed the things for the pupils to make and they helped me make them. [laughter] Or was it the other way around?

Mitchell: They must have been beautiful.

Schaeffer: Well, I was inspired by Macintosh, because I had a clipping from a magazine, just a page with these little tables, cabinets and things on it, all straight lines, for which he is now famous. It looked as though he'd been inspired by Ming household furniture, which was later on of course an inspiration for the Swedish modern.

I had the students make armchairs, tables, cabinets, twin beds, et cetera, et cetera. There was nothing that we didn't tackle. I even designed a modern, tall grandfather's clock, along art nouveau lines. No period things, no imitation of period

Schaeffer: things. The art nouveau movement in France had a great influence on my design, naturally. However, after visiting Munich and Vienna the French art nouveau was no longer an inspiration to me. It was a time when the construction was to be featured as a decorative part, so we did lampshades in copper with designs cut out like a stencil.

Mitchell: I have seen many pictures in the California Design 1910 book.

Schaeffer: At that same time I was doing metalwork in my Pasadena bungalow workshop.

The next year in 1914 in the fall I was to leave this school, because somebody was to take my place when I went to Europe. I was then to go to Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles and teach metalwork and handicraft jewelry. We didn't set diamonds in gold and that expensive sort of thing. It was all art-craft work, mostly in silver and copper. So that was the position I was to come back to, but I didn't come back to California in time, having been detained in Europe because of the war. I came to San Francisco instead, but that's another story.

Douglas Donaldson

Mitchell: While you were at Throop, you were studying privately with Batchelder, and did you ever meet any other people in that arts and crafts culture?

Schaeffer: Yes, indeed, Douglas Donaldson. He also had visited the Vienna Workshops before me. He'd been in Europe earlier. He was greatly influenced by those workshops. He did beautiful silver work. I think Harvard's museum and several other museums have examples of his work. He was tops, a great craftsman, not only in metal but in furniture too. He and I and his wife Louise became close friends. He taught at Poly\* before me; I followed him. He was leaving that year in 1910, and so that's why Batchelder knew that there was to be an opening. That's why he wanted me to come.

Mitchell: He went on to found a school of his own? Donaldson.

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\*"Poly" is Throop Polytechnic Elementary School.



Schaeffer: No, he went to teach in the Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles. Then he was going to leave that position and set up a workshop adjoining his new home.

I met Donaldson in Batchelder's class in Minnesota. All those years from 1909 up until just a few years ago when he passed away, he and his wife were my dearest friends. All those years! Think of it! A lifetime. That's why sometimes I find myself lonely now. In these abrasive times deep and lasting friendships seem a thing of the past.

Mitchell: You taught with Donaldson at the Chautauqua?

Schaeffer: No, I studied with him that summer. The next summer I taught. That was summer of 1913, and summer of 1912.

While in Pasadena I did some private tutoring. I had a student whose folks had one of the mansions on Orange Grove Avenue and a summer home in Montecito. They had three or four children and two governesses--one looked after the household and one after the children. The two eldest each had a car. The mother drove an electric car, much in fashion then. I gave this chap lessons in woodwork. He had a nice shop that was fitted up and I remember I always got a \$5 gold piece for that lesson. That was big pay for an hour's work.

Mitchell: All of you craftsmen who were part of that culture in those days, was there an excitement among all of you?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, it was an interesting life. We were all enthusiastic, as I look back at it. There was a great feeling of comraderie. But we took it all as a matter of course.

#### A Small Wooden Box: Influence of Oriental Design

Mitchell: That was where you also, I gather, became interested in Oriental design, the first exposure to--

Schaeffer: To Japanese things.

Mitchell: How did that come about?

Schaeffer: [pause to bring a small wooden box into the room] This is one of my most precious possessions, one of the first things I bought in Pasadena, at an Oriental shop. I was attracted to it. See,

Schaeffer: it's perfectly plain. It is a refinement of what Macintosh was doing. You look at this around here [showing the small Japanese box], the parquet, this work on this surface. Instead of being just plain knobs like we might do, this one is a tiny copper pear, and one is a pomegranate and one is a pine cone, you see? My appreciation of the beautiful space division on the drawers goes back to my teacher at the Thomas School in Detroit, who evidently was a Dow student. I learned space division, how to divide up spaces in an interesting way, which is one of the features of good Japanese interior and exterior design. Later I planned a course on space design for the present school curriculum. You see, this was what my past awareness attracted me to, this first thing I bought.

Mitchell: And that little chest was made in Japan?

Schaeffer: I'm sure this is Japanese, but it could have easily have also been Chinese. And it originally had a little mirror stand on it. Actually I think it was a little cosmetic cabinet, you see.

I had my students at the Polytechnic School make chests, and cabinets, very simply but on a very much larger scale. They had to put on what they could find in the stores for a pull. I taught the making of desk drawers. Part of the exercise was to make a dovetail joint, so the front of the drawers dovetailed into the side. This piece doesn't have a dovetail joint, this is just glued firmly. Big furniture would have strong dovetail joints.

Well, that was my introduction to Oriental design.

#### Johonnot and Others

Mitchell: You just mentioned the influence of Arthur W. Dow. Let's go back one step, because I remember last week you discussed studying with Ralph Jhonnot, who was the pupil of Arthur W. Dow at Columbia University.

Schaeffer: Yes, you see Dow's influence wove in through Jhonnot. In Pasadena I studied with Jhonnot. He was a decorative painter as well as a designer. He came, I think, in 1913.

There was a Swiss lady then, Emma Waldvogel, who came to Pasadena while I taught there. She came with her new machine, that had just been invented, to do machine embroidery. She was doing fascinating machine embroidery in the modern colors, the modern designs influenced by Vienna. I have a small piece of that work, also some of the work of Mrs. Jhonnot. And then the Donaldsons.



Schaeffer: They met at the Chautauqua Summer School at Mt. Hermon in the Santa Cruz mountains. While I was teaching in Pasadena the Donaldsons lived in Los Angeles, such a charming place to visit, and I visited them often. (They built their own house in Hollywood later.) I'd come in through the front door and I'd say to "T"--his nickname for friends--"Now, I have to see everything!" I would barely take off my hat and coat, and I'd move right around the room into the dining room, and around and return to the front door, so I wouldn't miss anything of beauty.

Mr. Donaldson would maybe have a Chinese stand here with a flower arrangement, or an art object, and over it would be just the right harmonious something on the wall, and then over here would be something else, and et cetera. I'd move around the room so I'd see everything.

Mitchell: You mentioned the word harmony. This seems to be a key word for the lessons of the group that you were a part of. Johonnot had a compositional harmony that he taught. Was that his main message?

Schaeffer: Yes, he gave, I remember, one assignment he had mimeographed, or some such process, even then, I'm sure, and then we filled in the colors. I remember one was a dining room. We filled in the colors from his prescribed palette, which of course was beautiful.

Mitchell: Was your first influence from Johonnot color harmony? Or was it more compositional harmony that he taught?

Schaeffer: Composition, colors have to be harmonious for design. It was the first time I had seen turquoise and chartreuse together. It brought a little shiver up my back. His work was decorative painting in oils.

Mitchell: We want to get you to Munich.

Schaeffer: All of these people were involved in my Pasadena experience, a kind of preparation for Munich. There was a Mr. and Mrs. Donaldson, there was Emma Waldvogel; there was Mr. and Mrs. Johonnot; and then the supervisor of art for public schools in Los Angeles, May Gearhart. She had also been to Europe and been influenced by the new movement. She put this new approach to art into the public school art departments. Her teachers had to study with Donaldson or Johonnot and later with me, so there was all that homogeneous feeling there.

Mitchell: So over the years all of you have really kept in touch?

Schaeffer: Yes indeed, until they passed away. All of us remained close friends and we kept in touch. And when I came up here and started my school. May Gearhart always filled my summer school with her teachers. No new teacher could come into her department unless they had a course with Rudolph Schaeffer! [laughter] She enrolled one summer herself.

### Munich and Vienna

Mitchell: I want to move to Munich if we think we can get you there now.

Schaeffer: Well, that's an easy move. I told you I was at the Throop Polytechnic Elementary School in 1911, 1912, and 1913. When this man came around and told me I was to go, there was a great furor at the school, a great furor, because one of their teachers had been chosen to go by the United States Commission of Education. It was a great feather in my cap.

But I didn't have enough money. I was earning just enough to live on--how I had just bought a grand piano I don't know--so I borrowed money from the parents of one of my pupils, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews. I borrowed \$1,000 and gave as security my insurance policy. And off I went. (In due time this was paid back in full.)

Mitchell: Munich gave tremendous new excitement to your career, didn't it?

Schaeffer: Yes, Munich was where I was surfeited with color, the new colors--magenta, chartreuse, turquoise blue, from the new German dyes. In Munich is where I learned to use tempera paint. Later I was the first teacher to use this medium. Also, I used to go to Sunday morning craft school. I had instruction in etching and printing lithographs. I have some lithographs still.

Mitchell: The atmosphere in Munich prior to World War I was very exciting. The arts were part of the school curriculum.

Schaeffer: Oh, absolutely. There were lots of crafts going on, things designed and made for the art of living, and I wasn't so painting-oriented as I was crafts-minded. I had to develop my appreciation of contemporary painting a little later, but I was always looking at what useful things man had made to embellish his life. I was an avid museum visitor.

Mitchell: What were some of the inspirations from that stay in Munich, that remain in your mind?

Schaeffer: Well, of course I found my way over to Vienna to the Wiener Werkstätte, directed by the famous architect, Joseph Hoffman. I don't know how I happened to go, but I went a couple of times to Vienna. After the schools were out, I think in May, I had plenty of time to wander around. I went to Salzburg which is on the way to Vienna. Music festivals were even then held in Salzburg. Then I spent a good deal of time in Vienna. Later I came back and hiked all through the Bavarian Alps, by myself.

Mitchell: What is the influence of Joseph Hoffman?

Schaeffer: He was the head man at the Wiener Werkstätte, the Vienna Workshop. They were doing textiles and ceramics and metal and all kinds of crafts there for the Hoffman interiors. Hoffman was then a noted modern architect.

Mitchell: What was his work like? How would you describe it?

Schaeffer: Very simple, very simple lines and functional. He liked personally to work in black and white.

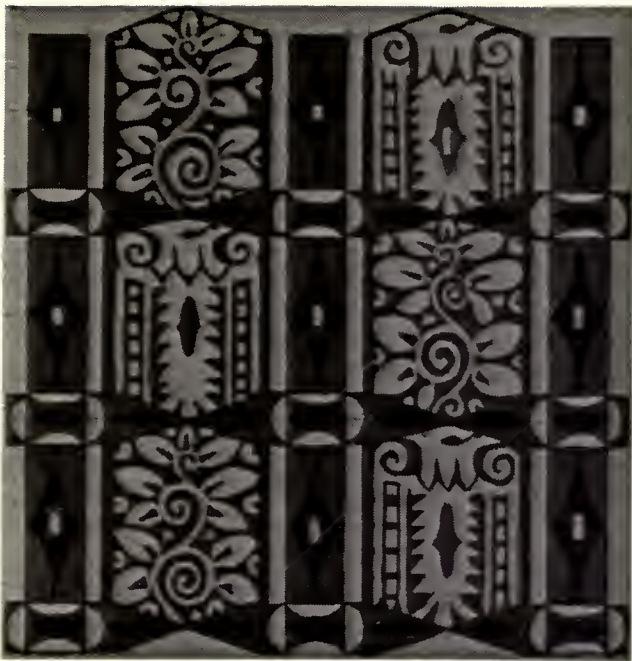
I think I told you, when I was in Columbus, I made a trip to Europe in 1908, before I studied with Batchelder in 1909. I spent most of my time in Paris and then went over to London on my way to Liverpool to come home. I saw an international exhibition of decorative arts, in London, in 1908, and the one thing that has stood out in my mind, all these years, was Hoffman's dining room, all very straight, black and white furniture, upholstered with brilliant flowered patterns. Little did I know then that I would later meet him and be taken under his wing in Vienna.

Mitchell: Is that what made you go to Vienna? To see his work?

Schaeffer: I don't think so. There were arts and crafts shops in Munich too, but not as elaborate. I had to see whatever was going on over there, for some reason, perhaps that inner urge to unfold my destiny!

The purpose of the group of twenty-five American teachers of which I was one from California was to investigate the industrial design being taught in the public schools of Munich and report to the United States Commission of Education. But we are interested in how all this affected my career at this time.

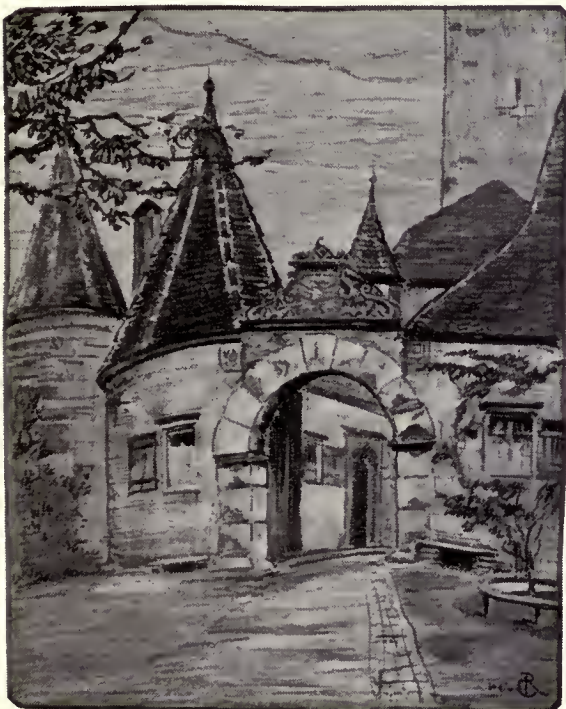




Design for printed silk in two or more colors, R. Schaeffer, 1917.



Design for block-printed textile, R. Schaeffer, 1917.



Stone lithograph, R. Schaeffer, Munich, 1914.



Rudolph Schaeffer (center, white smock), Royal Arts and Crafts School, Munich, Germany, 1914.



Bauhaus

- Mitchell: What about the Bauhaus? Was that an influence that came later?
- Schaeffer: That was all part of the same movement, but the artists connected with that, architects too, the names don't come to me very easily. Gropius was the architect, and his first building was the Bahnhof, the railroad station in Munich.
- Mitchell: But Rudolph, the Bauhaus style seems much more severe than anything you stand for.
- Schaeffer: Oh yes, of course. I too was more severe in design at the beginning too, but I had what the Bauhaus didn't have. Mrs. Moholy-Nagy who came later to teach at the Schaeffer School said if the Bauhaus was established now, they would lean a little more toward aesthetics. But in those days, when the Bauhaus was formed, decoration seemed to be something added on extraneous, interfering with the form and function. Look at the Dresden ware, for example, and all that kind of stuff. I don't know how that ornateness would impress somebody else. But anyway, I guess I'm one of the last of the Mohicans. [laughter]

I should have kept a journal. I tell my pupils, I say to keep a journal, but you know one takes everything for granted when young. I was just like any other average young person. I will tell you what I do have: for more than twenty years, I have my class notebooks, where I've had my notes, the things that I would teach, or lectures that I would give. [interruption to change tape]

[observing cutting the tape with a penknife] The reason why that jackknife popped into my mind was that I traded a squirrel for a jackknife. My brother and I used to make traps for squirrels. We'd put an ear of corn in a box and have a trap cover. When the squirrel would nibble on the corn, the cover would come down, plop, and trap the squirrel. We built one of those cages that have a cylinder where the squirrel would go in and go around in the cage. We'd feed the squirrel for a while, and then we'd let him go.

But I took a squirrel down to school and a schoolmate of mine had a jackknife and he wanted that squirrel and I traded a squirrel for the jackknife. That's how I got my jackknife. I never thought of that--I can't remember when I last thought about trading that squirrel for a jackknife but all these interviews brought back memories.

Schaeffer: color I had some introduction to color but not prismatic color, and going to the church, I saw at the end of the nave, on the side, this window, the altar window. You could see from a distance the side aisle and the color was a gorgeous magenta. When I got up close I saw it was little pieces of red and blue put together. I hadn't studied color at the time, but I somehow knew that red and blue made purple. I did not know the term magenta. I remember that now after all those years.

We were in Paris for five weeks, I think. Then I left my friend in Paris. I left him to travel somewhere. I decided to return to "the States" (as the United States was known abroad). I had to go back to the farm, and see my parents, and tell them about all the wonders I had seen. I was always close to my parents, and before I went back to teach again, I had to make some kind of a visit back to the farm.

My friend had an aunt in Paris, an aunt and her friend, living together in Paris. His aunt was deaf. That's where I had to learn to speak distinctly, because she read the lips. It was a great lesson for me. Like a lot of the Clare children, I mumbled my words. [laughter] A lot of people do that now.

Why, my dear, I mustn't tell tales outside of school, but my dear friend whose committee I've sat on for five or six years, he talks down here. His voice goes right down into his tie and I can't understand a word he says; he might also have his pipe in the corner of his mouth too!

Mitchell: [laughing] You should have been an actor, Rudy!

Schaeffer: How in hell am I going to hear or understand him? [laughs] Oh, I'm on tape, I forgot!

While I was in Paris I was always getting lost, on the subway in the Metro. We lived near the Luxembourg Gardens and I'd take the wrong subway and then when I'd emerge (at the wrong street) I'd have to take a taxi in order to get home. That was my first trip to Paris in 1908.

#### Taking Courses from Ernest Batchelder and Others

Schaeffer: The next summer I went to Minneapolis to summer school and studied with a man who was then considered one of the best teachers of design in this country, Ernest Batchelder. He had a summer course in advanced design. I had had some work in design at the Thomas



Schaeffer: School. I was always taking courses anyway, a course in stenciling one time, in Columbus, Ohio, and a course in metalwork also, jewelry, with a man by the name of Paine.

What makes me so impatient with some young members of the staff is they think after they've graduated from the Schaeffer School and are on the teaching staff, they know everything there is to know about color design! They know everything that I have to teach them in three years, and I've been at it for a lifetime, and I can teach them a dozen three-year courses. But they stop studying. I was always studying. I was always taking courses, always taking courses. Still do! I sit at the feet of people who give lectures at the school, learning something new all the time. That's the old ego cropping up.

Anyway, Batchelder: he was a great teacher. He pushed me right into the advanced class, and we made tracings of Persian and Coptic designs. Then we had to do something original on that theme, which is something I could even have my students do today. Batchelder published some of my things in his book. One is in black and white, and in the vault I have saved two of them that he had us do in color, with water color. We had to scrub them, put the water color on in bright color, then scrub it down and that made it all very soft and antique, very toned, because it was soft colors in those days. We didn't have the bright, brilliant colors that we have now.

Mitchell: Where had Batchelder received his training?

Schaeffer: He came out from Harvard I think, and Boston, to teach in and direct the Throop Institute.

Mitchell: He was doing a summer class.

Schaeffer: In Minneapolis, yes. Batchelder said there was going to be an opening in the elementary school for a man to teach manual training in the fall of 1910. Having taught in Columbus three years, at a pretty good job, you see, I said, well, I'd like to think about it.

I went home and the more I thought about it, going to California, Pasadena, Los Angeles, the more I wanted to go. So I wrote to Mr. Batchelder and I said, "Is it too late for me to decide?" No, it wasn't too late. So in August 1910, I was on my way, stopping at the Grand Canyon, riding a burro, with all the Santa Fe passengers. In those days the railroads made a great thing of going to California. You could stop on the way and see things, tourist-like. So I remember going on a burro down the Grand Canyon. (Oh, wasn't that wonderful for a country boy from Clare, my gracious!!!)

Mitchell: What did you actually learn from Batchelder?

Schaeffer: Design, based on historic design. There were very few teachers of design. Arthur W. Dow, at Columbia Teachers College, was best known. He was Georgia O'Keefe's teacher. My contact with him was through Johonnot and presumably earlier with a Dow student at the Thomas school. Batchelder's was one of the first books published in America on design.

Mitchell: When you got to Pasadena, had he built his house yet?

Schaeffer: He had built his house and he already had his little factory making tiles. He was no longer teaching at the Throop Institute when I arrived. I don't know when he left there, but I think it's recorded somewhere.

He had his own little house and I think in the back he had his kiln. I don't think he had established his workshop downtown yet. Anyway, that's where I went to see him immediately, and I saw him all the time I was there. I took lessons from him, private lessons, you see.

Mitchell: In design?

Schaeffer: In design, yes. I had taken this course with Paine in jewelry, in Columbus. I had a little attic apartment in a bungalow, on Villa Street. There, in the little screened porch, I set up my little workshop and in my spare time I did metalwork and jewelry. Then I came up to the Santa Cruz mountains that first summer and Douglas Donaldson was giving a course up there in Mt. Hermon Chautauqua. Those were the days of the Chautauqua summer schools all over the country. This one was at Ben Lomond in the Santa Cruz mountains. It was devoted to crafts. The first summer I studied with Donaldson, in metalwork. And then I came up the next summer and taught, and made that pot I showed you.

Mitchell: That's where you made the coffee pot?

Schaeffer: Yes, when I was teaching up there. And my students said, "I bet if you pour it it will drip," and everybody tried it and they couldn't make the spout drip.

Mitchell: It's interesting, I see a pattern of always studying with a teacher who had something at that moment that interested you to learn.

Schaeffer: Maybe it was because there was something interesting going on all the time, I don't know.

A Crusader for Color and Design

Mitchell: Did you feel that everything was new?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, truly exciting. There were only a few of us doing it, and the rest of the world were our subjects. [laughs] When I started my school, I thought I was going to reform the world with design and color and the world was going to wake up. I'd tell my students, "You have to be a crusader for color and design, the modern idea, the creative idea." All the old stuff we threw out of the window. Period furniture, along with that fellow who wrote the book, Goodbye Mr. Chippendale, everything went out. Of course it came back, stealthily: we would put a Chippendale chair in a contemporary room, and we taught the beauty of a Queen Anne chair--there's nothing quite as beautiful and graceful as the back of the Queen Anne chair--but all the Queen Anne's and everything went out the window into the garbage pit. [laughter]

Mitchell: Well, in a way Rudolph, you were a revolutionary.

Schaeffer: I'm a radical! Absolutely. I believe in freedom of creative expression. My school tries to keep the flame burning, but there's not that fervor among young people now. They're mostly job oriented, money oriented. I never thought about making money. That was not the reason I was doing these things. It was to fulfill a basic need of creativity. That was just natural, to work, create and teach, like you breathe. You had to have some money to go on, that was natural, but how much didn't matter, just so you had enough to live on. Now that's the main concern.

Mitchell: A commercialization of everything.

Schaeffer: Yes, and a fragmentation of everything. In my work and teaching, one part leads into another, a great unity.

Mitchell: You still believe that, don't you?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, sure, I'm not caught in this materialism. I don't want to be caught in it. That's why I don't want to sell myself. I just want to have enough. I have social security, a small salary here, and I have a home to live in, with art and music and a garden of flowers. What else would I want? I can hop on the plane and go over to Honolulu, if I want to.

More on Johonnot, Pupil of Dow

Schaeffer: There was Donaldson, Batchelder in Pasadena, and Emma Volvogel, the three of us, and then the supervisor of drawing, May Gearhart in Los Angeles. There were just a few.

Then came on the scene in 1913, Ralph Johonnot, who was a pupil of Dow, who was the teacher of Georgia O'Keefe. We all flocked to him for his classes. Mrs. Johonnot did stitchery and he did decorative painting, landscapes.

Mitchell: In terms of their age, if you're Georgia O'Keefe's age, and Johonnot was a student of Dow...

Schaeffer: Georgia O'Keefe is quite elderly now. All of us are elderly. We were all young in those days.

Mitchell: You and Johonnot were the same age?

Schaeffer: About the same age.

Mitchell: Did you ever know Georgia O'Keefe?

Schaeffer: No, never knew her.

Mitchell: Why haven't we known more about Johonnot?

Schaeffer: I could have been the instrument of his being known. His wife passed away, but the administrator of the will didn't know what to do with the paintings. She gave me the whole list of paintings, all his paintings, that he'd exhibited, left them to the Schaeffer School.

They were in Carmel and I was to go down, but this was when I first moved here, into this building, and I was so absorbed in this building, in getting a school started, that I put off arranging a truck and going down to Carmel to get these paintings. In the meantime the son, Ralph Johonnot, Jr.--he had very little use for his father's paintings, and for his father in particular, because he grew up in resistance to a father who was so meticulous about his house that he wouldn't lay a newspaper down for fear it would spoil the composition, something like some people I know today where everything has to be just so. He [Johonnot, Sr.] was so interested in color, one side of his house was painted one color and the other side another color, and he was a great artist, a great teacher.

The son, I don't know what he's done with the paintings. I've tried to get in touch with him, but he lives in Los Angeles. What has become of those beautiful paintings? I could have exhibited them.



Schaeffer: And publicized them. Because I have up in the attic some of the textiles and some of the art objects and colored things to go with the paintings, for composition.

When he passed on, there was no record. Nobody had come, like you have come to me, and like Mrs. Angelo come to me, to make a record. I've lost track of the lady who was the administrator of the will.

Mitchell: Where did he teach?

Schaeffer: He taught at Pratt Institute, New York, and he taught privately, in Los Angeles and Pasadena. He also taught in Hawaii, in Honolulu. He went all over the west with his message of beautiful color.

#### Parents Join Rudolph in Germany, August 1914

Mitchell: Your parents joined you in Munich, didn't they?

Schaeffer: I met them in Berlin. I was through with whatever I was to do in Munich, about May. They wanted to come over the first of August, my mother and father. My father had turned over the farm to my brother. He had wanted to come to Germany for many years, so finally they relinquished the farm and I met them in Berlin in August 1914.

My father's relatives lived in Mecklenburg, north of Berlin, between Berlin and the North Sea. I met them in Berlin and we travelled to Mecklenburg. We were there only three days and World War I broke out. At that time all the tourists in Europe, when the war broke out, flocked back to the ports and came back. Many of them had to come back steerage. There was much published at that time about them coming back steerage. But my father had brought enough money along so that he could stay longer.

Most everybody in Germany didn't have any money left, only their ticket going home. They had spent all their money, and were urged to go, almost forced to go, because Germany didn't want to take care of foreigners during the war, and provide for them. So we were allowed to stay as long as we didn't have to be dependent. My father didn't want my mother to go steerage. Not that they were too elegant to do that, but it was too much of a hardship on my mother. So with no arrangements to return, we stayed and visited the relatives all through August, September, and October.



Schaeffer: In November I made frequent trips to Berlin. (One trip I visited Dresden. I had that city in mind when I wanted to study music, so I went to Dresden, went to the museum.) Each time I went to the consul to see whether we could get passage. Finally, in November, the consul got us passage on a boat from Rotterdam to New York. So we picked up and left. It was a sad farewell.

We travelled to Rotterdam and embarked on the ship and when we were about in the center of the English Channel we were on the deck and we saw all this flag-waving from another ship. It was a Red Cross steamer that we were on, and this waving was to tell us that we were headed directly toward a mine. We learned afterward the reason why the ship made an abrupt turn: if we'd gone just a few miles farther, perhaps a few yards farther, we would have been blown to smithereens. [interruption for a phone call]

Mitchell: We were in the middle of the Atlantic before we were interrupted.

Schaeffer: No, we were in the middle of the North Sea! [laughter]

While in Mecklenburg, I had sent cables to Los Angeles, to the public school department and to the authorities where I was to go to teach, you see, at the Manual Arts High School, but nothing ever got through. When I arrived in December (I had gone home with my parents to Michigan), my precious Los Angeles job was filled. I don't recall having any great disappointment about that, however. I really wanted to teach color and design, not metalwork. I was ready for change.

#### Teaching in the Bay Area: The California College of Arts and Crafts

Mitchell: What did you do?

Schaeffer: I thought, well, I have to have a job, and so I had been up here to San Francisco on my way to the Chautauqua in Ben Lomond and I had contacted the principal of the Polytechnic High School in Oakland. He referred me to Frederick Meyer, who was the supervisor of art and manual training in Oakland, and also had the School of California Arts and Crafts on Allston Way in Berkeley, which is of course now the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland.

They awarded me a doctorate in fine arts, last April!

Mitchell: They took a long time to do that, didn't they?

Schaeffer: They took from 1915 to 1980.

Schaeffer: Well, Mr. Meyer immediately gave me a job teaching manual training on 12th Street in Oakland. I was only there a couple of weeks or more, and he transferred me to Hayward, to be the assistant to the art teacher in Hayward, William Rice who is well known in the archives of art in Oakland Museum and he's a well-known print maker. I taught there for a few weeks, and then Meyer said I should come and teach design at his school, for the spring term. There I taught my first course in color design. At the University in Berkeley, I taught a course in color design, and one in design for metal crafts.

Norman Edwards was my most brilliant student at Arts and Crafts. I gave him the job of being my helper, my assistant, and he had free tuition. (I don't know if they had to pay any tuition in those days or not.) When I gave the assignment of a flower in a bowl--a colorful and abstract imaginary flower--to the class of about eighteen people, each one would bring one example, but Norman Edwards would bring a dozen or a dozen and a half versions of the same thing. He said, "This is what I've been looking for. This is the most exciting work."

I taught private classes in 1916, and Norman Edwards came and worked with me, and studied further, did wonderful things. I had a rear cottage on Greenbank Avenue, in Piedmont, and I had a little workshop there where I did some metalwork.

I remember I had a commission to make a metal belt with sections alternating bird cutouts and animal, alternating bird, animal, bird, linked together. Norman was there and I had put this whole thing in the pickle. (After you get all the soldering done, you put it in a pickle of hydrochloric acid, to burn off the excess soldering, so it cleans it up nicely. Then you polish it.) Norman and I went for a walk up the Moraga Road and I forgot all about that metal belt. We were gone hours, and it was to be just put in for fifteen or twenty minutes, so the whole thing was eaten up when I got back. I never did get the thing redone. [laughter]

#### Panama Pacific Exposition

Mitchell: Now Rudolph, we've gotten to 1916, but I want you to tell me something about that 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition. Did you go to it? Were you at all a part of it?

Schaeffer: No, I just visited it.

When I first came to Oakland I took a room at the Oakland Hotel--which has been vacant for a long time, as you know, and now it's just been recently turned into a home for elderly, which is very

Schaeffer: nice. Then I moved to this little rear cottage where in the front house lived a family of a missionary, Mr. and Mrs. Rice. They were missionaries in the South Sea Islands for many years. They had two daughters. One daughter is dead, and the other one, Gwen, I still keep in touch with her. She sends me a Christmas card every year, all these years.

Mitchell: The Panama Pacific Exposition, did it excite you, was it stimulating?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, and it was the first color that broke out in the West, those beautiful emerald green doors, and the soft, soft salmon pinks, and color. And the paintings which are now housed in the War Memorial here, in the Herbst Theater, the Brangman paintings, each one was at the end of a long corridor in colors. The perspective was dramatic.

Mitchell: What about the night lighting?

Schaeffer: Oh, the Tower of Jewels, it was magnificent!

Mitchell: Your student, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, told me a lot about the Panama Pacific Exposition and how exciting it was at night with the lighting. Was it in color?

Schaeffer: Yes, colored lights. And I'm trying to think of the man's name, a painter in Boston, who had charge of the color. It was a planned color scheme.

In any case, I was in Oakland teaching private classes and somehow or other I heard of an opening at the San Francisco Institute of Art, which was then the California School of Fine Arts. (I suppose someday I should change my school from Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design to Institute of Design. Everything is an institute. I often thought I should change it to Color Design because what distinguishes the school is its teaching of color, you see. That's another story I want to talk to you about.)

In the spring of 1917, there was a vacancy of design and crafts at the California School of Fine Arts, and I took over that job.

### Anne Brigman

Mitchell: Before we get involved with the California School of Fine Arts, I want to ask you about Anne Brigman. When did you know her?

Schaeffer: I can't remember whether I met her when I was still living in Piedmont. Yes, it must have been. She loved to tell this story about her garden. Did you know anything about that? There's been a lot of research on Anne Brigman and I have a collection of her photographs, too.

Mitchell: She was a very interesting photographer.

Schaeffer: She was the first one to pose nudes out in nature, with trees, rocks and streams. Beautiful photographs. Vogue published her things, and Stieglitz was very much interested, and I think she made a trip to New York, to see him. Stieglitz was the husband of Georgia O'Keefe, who as I mentioned, was a student of Dow. All goes around. Somehow or other I was involved in all of that.

Mitchell: What was her studio like?

Schaeffer: Oh, well it was like a little shack, really. There was a living room and a kitchen and I think a bedroom. Her shower was a part of the house. The house was built around a tree, and the shower head was hung in this tree. That's how she had her shower. It sounds crazy but in all it was really charming. I think the shower was closed off, naturally, but somehow rigged up where the tree went up through the roof.

She had this lovely little garden, rather wild looking, something like our garden here, semi-wild. There was a great willow tree that hung over the front gate, making a charming entrance. But behind the gate was hidden the garbage can, and one morning during the 1915 Fair she heard the garbage man call to his partner, his assistant, "Hey, Bill! Come in and see this little garden. It's the damndest cutest little place you ever saw. You could take it up on a shovel and take it over to the fair." [laughter] It was worth seeing. Norman Edwards and I attended many parties there.

Mitchell: She had apparently a use of color on her walls in her studio. Where did that come from?

Schaeffer: I don't know. The walls were covered with a soft, tan burlap, and she had a little, high, narrow shelf around two sides of the room, and on that, for the first time in my life, I saw driftwood. This was 1916 or 1917, along there. And that is what started me on driftwood. I made driftwood arrangements and we had the first driftwood arrangement with flowers and branches at the St. Anne Street school that was ever shown anywhere in the country. We called it "Field and Forest Exhibition." Later one of my students got out a book on using driftwood, but no driftwood was used in flower arrangement before that. That was one of Rudy's firsts, according to Dorr Bothwell. Driftwood became an important factor in the new flower arrangement courses I was giving.



Mitchell: You and Anne Brigman were good friends.

Schaeffer: Oh yes, and Norman Edwards came in there. I sort of annexed Norman Edwards and we worked together. We had so much in common because he saw eye to eye with me on the aesthetic values and principles on beauty, on good design, on relationships of harmony, balance, rhythm in the visual world. If I find a student where that insight sparks, like this Juk-san here...Norman Edwards, he was a genius. (I'll show you one of his paintings that I have.) Anyway, when people share that keen aesthetic appreciation, it is similar to a religious belief; there's a close bond there. Their metaphysical outlook is similar, like Dr. Chaudhuri and I, you see. He's one of my closest friends, and Mrs. Nourse, my truth teacher, closest friends, and there's that bond of spiritual outlook.

Mitchell: What kind of a person was Anne Brigman?

Schaeffer: Out-of-doors person. She often posed in the nude in her innovative outdoor photographs. Vanity Fair and Vogue, the two avant garde magazines, published her photographs and proclaimed her a pioneer in outdoor photography. Of course Ansel Adams is the famous outdoor man now. She loved the outdoors and made many excursions to surrounding countryside and beaches.

Mitchell: So you hiked together?

Schaeffer: We'd go over on the ferry to Mill Valley and then we'd take the electric train that formerly used to go to Mill Valley, but we'd get off half way and then hike through ranches and over the hills to what we called Smuggler's Cove, on the beach. There we'd go oftentimes for weekends and sleep on the beach, rolled in a blanket on the sand. That was in those creative years.

There's so few things I remember. Norman remembered; he had a great sense of humor and he remembered so many stories. But anyway, Norman and I were going to invent a vehicle that would have a little wheel on one side and a big wheel on the other side, because the trail would follow along the side of the mountain and so we could push her along like in a push buggy. We didn't know quite how to manage it, though, on these steep hills, so we kept trying to figure it out. [laughs] Isn't it funny how the craziest things stick in your mind when something really very important just escapes you?

Mitchell: How was she thought of? Was she a radical the way you were a radical? Were you unusual in the community of artists?



- Schaeffer: It seems to me that I always cultivated unusual people who were doing far out things. She was one of the first ones that did color photography, and had color glass plates [negatives]. That was before the color films were invented. By the way, the Oakland Museum has a large collection of her photographs.
- Mitchell: Did she have parties in her studio?
- Schaeffer: Yes, she'd have Sunday afternoons where you would meet interesting people, kind of old-fashioned soirees. People used to have Sunday afternoon gatherings; they don't do that anymore.
- Mitchell: Later, didn't she turn to poetry?
- Schaeffer: Yes, yes. And she wrote poems which oftentimes accompanied her photographs.
- Mitchell: And as I understand it, her eyesight wasn't so good, and so she turned more to poetry.
- Schaeffer: Yes. That's right. And in later years she lived down south. The latter part of her life I didn't see much of her. She was down in Long Beach or someplace down there. Redondo, or somewhere down there.

Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, and Dorothea Lange

- Mitchell: What about other artists who were associated with her, like Edward Weston?
- Schaeffer: Oh yes, she knew Weston.
- Mitchell: Did you know some of these other people?
- Schaeffer: I knew Weston, yes. I didn't know him well, but I'd meet him. People in the arts, we all met, there weren't so many, we knew each other.
- Mitchell: Like Imogen, you knew her well?
- Schaeffer: Oh yes, Imogen was one of the first. She and Roi [Partridge] lived over there just as you drive up to Twin Peaks. I think the house is still there, a little one-story house. I lived near there, at the end of Willard Street, off of Parnassus, facing the forest. That's another episode.

Mitchell: We will get to that phase shortly, but for now, I want to mention a few more of these people to see if you want to talk about them. What about Arnold Genthe?

Schaeffer: I didn't know him. She must have known him.

Mitchell: Perhaps he was going to New York about the time you came here, I'm not sure.

Schaeffer: Dorothea--she died some few years ago, she was recently on television--

Mitchell: Oh, Dorothea Lange?

Schaeffer: Yes, Dorothea Lange, the wife of Maynard Dixon. See, he was on the faculty with me at the California School of Fine Arts.

Isadora Duncan and Raymond Duncan

Mitchell: Another thing I wanted to ask you about. Did you ever see Isadora Duncan dance?

Schaeffer: Yes. I also met her mother, who lived in East Oakland. I knew her brother, Raymond, very well. I first met him in Paris in 1925. When I visited the Paris Decoratif Exposition I was introduced to him, and during my stay in Paris we became very good friends. When he ever came back to San Francisco he always came to visit me. He came once to the school and gave a lecture at the school. In his later years he brought a lady companion--what was her name?

I remember one time he was going to give a talk at the school on a Sunday night. We had invited a number of people. His party was going to come early enough, about four o'clock in the afternoon, and have a bite. He was a vegetarian so it had to be something very special for him. So we invited the other guests to come at seven. Well, four o'clock came and I had the table all set in the front gallery, where he was to speak near the window, looking out on St. Mary's Park. A nice table set for four people. And then five o'clock came. Nobody. Six o'clock came. Nobody. And by the time it was moving towards seven, people were starting to come in, so I had to move that nice table and everything into the back office. And crammed into that small space we had our hurried little supper, when he arrived.

Schaeffer: He gave a most interesting talk, and showed us how, when we are lying down on the floor, to get up gracefully.

Mitchell: Isadora was liberating the body the way you were liberating vision, really, in many ways.

Schaeffer: That's why when I started the school I wanted a connection between rhythmic eye and kinetic rhythm. I was interested early in rhythm, rhythm in color and design, as well as in movement. I thought it would be advantageous to have a class, extracurricular class, in dance. And a name that should be not forgotten is Ann Mundstock. She was the one contemporary dance teacher in San Francisco at that time, and taught the modern dance in harmony with Martha Graham and had studied with Mary Wigman, the German dancer in Europe.

It was Mary Wigman that taught Ann Mundstock the breathing exercises that Ann taught her students, and I was one of her students. She said, "Rudy, you'll never make a dancer. You're too earthbound." I was too short and stubby.

But I loved it, she taught us this rhythmic breathing, and I taught it many times to my students. And I'll give you a demonstration some time later.

#### Prismatic Color and Rhythm

Mitchell: The California School of Fine Arts was where you developed all of your new curriculum.

Schaeffer: A beginning of the new approach to teaching design and color.

Mitchell: What were some of those ideas? What were some of those new courses? What were they called, and what did they consist of?

Schaeffer: Well, first of all color. Johonnot taught these lovely prismatic colors, but he didn't teach anything about the prism. He didn't have us make a color wheel, we just related the colors naturally, intuitively. He taught us this beautiful palette, and we worked with his palette.

Then when I got to the California School of Fine Arts I was influenced by MacDonald Wright, who painted with prismatic color. I picked up a little book--I still have it here--by Hatt, and it had the prismatic color wheel, explaining the prismatic theory of light and color, beam of light of red over green producing yellow; green over violet blue, producing turquoise blue; violet blue over red, producing magenta.

Schaeffer: The three light primaries, green, red, and violet blue, that was the spectrum sequence which, when overlapping, produced all the other colors that ever existed, in certain degrees of combination. And my whole theory to this day is an elaboration of that theory, in harmony, balance, rhythm. And that's why I called it The School of Rhythm and Chromatic Design, which was very flossy, non-understandable by the layman.

One chap who came to school and became the secretary, after he'd studied, said, "Rudy, I wanted to come to your school for a long time "--he was a graduate of Stanford University--"I wanted to come to your school for a long time, but the long name scared me away." So I then thought it would be better to drop it, but in recent years I've emphasized it more and more, because I've realized that that's what my teaching creative color was all about, in a nutshell!

Contrast. Call it color contrast, or any contrast, but the greatest contrast in the world visually is black and white, isn't it? Imagine a stick, one end white and one end black: what's in between?

Mitchell: Tones of grey?

Schaeffer: Innumerable, infinite numbers of grays, in between. I worked with the "stick," not only the ends of the stick, but the stick itself, which is ignored. Most artists just make another shorter stick, and shorter stick, but always two ends of the stick but nothing in between, no transition in between. Black, middle, white, you can just have one step in between to make a transition. It takes three to make a rhythm. Two doesn't make a rhythm. It's one, two, three; rhythm is measured movement.

It's as simple as that, but hard to put into practice. The most fundamental things are the most simple in the world, and you move from the simple into the complex, but it's difficult to move from the complex into the simple.

Mitchell: When you were at California School of Fine Arts, what did you actually teach there? What did you call your courses?

Schaeffer: Design and Color, and also I taught Batik, Block Printing. Then I taught some stage design, interior design, applying principles of color and design to interiors.

Mitchell: What course was it that Louise Dahl-Wolfe took from you that so excited her?

Schaeffer: Color and Design. She took everything, however. I didn't make any separation. It was all one thing, which in later years has fragmented. Now I have a teacher teaching this and another teaching that. What I taught with an assistant in crafts, in two years or one year, can't be approached in three years because it's fragmented, and necessarily so. Now the students don't get the unity so easily. They don't see right away that it's all aspects of one thing, one design. They separate screen printing from drawing--everything is a separate course.

My teachers seem to have difficulty in integrating it enough. That's why I have had to keep teaching; I have to constantly integrate, integrate, integrate the various aspects of the teaching.

Mitchell: Your influence on Louise Dahl-Wolfe, your student back in 1917, set her on a career in color.

Schaeffer: Like so many. It was new. Today they take color for granted. In those days rooms were done--if they went into color, it was a green living room and a red dining room.

Mitchell: When your students were learning from you there, what kinds of things did they go on and do?

Schaeffer: Well, of course, I was a part of the whole art school. Did I show you the magazine covers that Frank McIntosh did? He electrified New York with his color. People all over the country collected his magazine covers, because they were something most unusual. I don't know, my forte was teaching, to inspire people to do creative things. I was a pretty good craftsman, but somehow or other I didn't have the patience to stick with a little bit of the thing, and file this silver, and make this little ball, and solder it on. When I got to do things on a huge scale at the Greek Theatre, I had no more love to work with little fiddly things.

#### Dorr Bothwell and the Powell Street School

Schaeffer: At the California School of Fine Arts was where I met Dorra Bothwell, who is an artist now up at Mendocino, spending her winters down in the desert. She studied along with Louise Dahl-Wolfe and Frank McIntosh.

Mitchell: She took a class from you and went on and wrote, and has taught and written about the no-tan?



Schaeffer: And I can't find my book that she gave me. I'm sad about that because in it she wrote a beautiful tribute to me.

Mitchell: I know that she has taught with Ansel Adams at his workshops at Yosemite, so your ideas have infiltrated there also. When was she in your class? Wasn't that at a summer program on Powell Street?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, that's right. That was after I left the school. That was the summer of 1925, the summer I went to Paris. Dorr Bothwell and Ruth Cravath, the sculptor, and Dorothy Wagner Cravath, who did mosaics, they all three were to be my helpers to put over the summer school with free tuition. That was the summer Dorr was the secretary, and one of them had to sweep the floor and keep the place neat and another one had to take care of supplies. Dorr was always kind of embarrassed because when she'd get an answer to her letters, they'd address her, "Dear Mr. Bothwell."

That Powell Street building is torn down now. It used to be the University Extension building. I was on the second floor and also the Grabhorns had a studio on that floor, the famous printers. They printed my first announcement, but unfortunately they didn't say printed by Grabhorn on it, otherwise one of those announcements would be worth several hundred dollars.

I dyed white muslin for window drapes in a sequence of prismatic color--orange, orange-yellow, green, yellow-green, turquoise. This gave a startling effect of color from the street below. Nobody here had seen any windows like that, and you could see the whole sequence on the west and south windows from down Powell Street.

### "Old Swish"

Mitchell: During the period you were at the California School of Fine Arts, you lived in San Francisco, didn't you?

Schaeffer: I moved from Greenbank Avenue and Norman came to stay with me at what we called "Old Swish." We looked all over San Francisco for some place, some old house. We wanted to find a house that we could remodel. Norman was busy with a decorating job, so I did all the remodeling.

I'll tell you why we called it "Old Swish." It was all run down and the windows were all boarded up and the neighbors called it the haunted house. We found an old trunk full of pictures of men and women, and we later discovered that the lady who lived there previously ran a matrimonial bureau. For some reason or other we burned up all but one.

Schaeffer: Just about that time, this big shipwreck up at Eureka had happened, and many people's lives were lost. That winter, when it was raining outside, and the eucalyptus trees would make a swishing noise as the wind blew them, we used to tell our visitors, "You hear that noise? That's Susy Swish. She was one of those who went down on that ship. That's her on the stairs with her wet dress, swish, swish, swish." [laughter] Crazy, just nuts, huh? And so we all got to call our house Old Swish.

Mitchell: With you teaching and just getting ready to go out on your own, that must have been a very exciting period.

Schaeffer: I just took it for granted. But when other people were waiting on tables, and clerking in a store, bank tellers, doing all kinds of different, mundane things, I did think here I was in a creative field, how blessed I was! How blessed I was to be in a creative field and doing something new every minute of the time. And there was my brother back on the farm milking his cows day after day, doing farm work, same old repetition over and over, and here I was in an exciting field. I didn't really fully appreciate it. That comes with maturity.

### In the Army

Mitchell: I can't believe that you went in the army.

Schaeffer: I was drafted, my dear.

Mitchell: How did you manage your army days?

Schaeffer: I don't know. Well, there were some very nice young men in the army. One was a Jewish fellow and we always called him Rosey--his name was Rosenthal or Rosenbaum, but he was known as Rosey--and there was another fellow, I've forgotten his name, but we had something in common, some aesthetic appreciation.

Mitchell: What was your work?

Schaeffer: First of all I was drafted, of course, but that's another story. My draft was extended because I was teaching at Stanford that summer. I taught there two summers and I taught a spring quarter at Stanford. Anyway, I was drafted, and I was sent to Angel Island overnight, only spent one night over there. That was a place that they sent all draftees. I took a test the next day and, as a result of this test, they sent me to a specialists school at Fort Scott, the very next day really. There I took drafting and surveying and topography, and mathematics, four subjects.

Schaeffer: Well, you know in high school I was the dumbest of the dumb in mathematics. I was so dumb that the professor threw an eraser at me. "Stupid!" But you know, in the army I started in mathematics with fractions. Then geometry, and from geometry into algebra, then trigonometry, and then we did calculus. Swift! I loved it, and got big marks: 90 and 95 and 100 every week test. How did that happen? I don't know. Just something clicked. Maybe it was the teacher. I was crazy about him. And to this day I think mathematics is one of the greatest and most fascinating studies. Fundamental. Cosmic.

We always had roll call; at some of the most ungodly hours they'd call roll call, when you least expected it. That's why they called it, because there was a great temptation to slip out, off into the Presidio, which I did one time. It happened to be the time my mother was visiting me. She'd come out, and she was keeping house, and I could come home on weekends, you see. But I used to steal away sometimes during the week. And one time I was just sitting down--oh, Mother had beautiful lamb chops, everything was just ready to sit down--and Rosey called. He said, "Rudy, there's going to be a roll call." Well, I just barely had time if I dropped everything and rushed across the park, to get into the Presidio, and I ran most of the way. I got there just in time to hear my name called, thanks to Rosey. [laughter]

INTERVIEW 4: April 2, 1981

Review of 1915-1925

Mitchell: We're going to discuss 1915 to 1925; we've brought you back from Munich. You came directly to San Francisco and worked, first of all for Frederick Meyer? We have to refresh our memories since you have been away a few weeks.

Schaeffer: In the spring of 1915 I taught a term at Frederick Meyer's Arts and Crafts School, which is now the California School of Arts and Crafts. It was a private school at that time. That's where I taught my first course in color and design, very much in the style and method that I had studied with Ralph Johonnot.

Johonnot, as I have said, made a great impress on my art expression. It was the first time that I had been introduced to these beautiful new prismatic colors which were being introduced by that time in Europe. They had not arrived here in this country, only through Johonnot. The summer before he came here, I think he was in Budapest, and studied there and in Vienna. When he came West and gave these private courses, art teachers flocked to him, and all the people who were interested in art. He taught landscape really, but I was more interested in the crafts and the color, so I didn't follow through into the landscape courses that he gave.

Anyway, he was a great influence on my color, and so when I got this job teaching in the Arts and Crafts School, of course, I gave similar assignments that I had had with him--I remember one of the first designs was to design a bowl with a flower, just one flower in a bowl, in color. Well, I remember I continued that then in the summer school at the University of California, and I was asked to give a course in color design, and one for metal.

Then the second year, in 1916, I gave private classes in Berkeley, and after the summer session those students who were regular students of the university wanted me to be in the art

Schaeffer: department and to give more of that work, but it didn't work out. I'm rather pleased that it didn't, because maybe I'd have been stuck as a university professor the rest of my life and I didn't want to tie myself down. I had a natural feeling of being free on my own; I didn't want to be tied up with any institution; I had in mind having a private school, really down deep in my subconscious.

California School of Fine Arts, Vis a Vis Decorative Arts

Schaeffer: Nevertheless, in the spring of 1917, there was a vacancy, and I really had to earn some money. (It was kind of a precarious existence, living off giving these courses.) How I happened to know about it I don't know, but there was a vacancy for a teacher of design and crafts at the California School of Fine Arts, where Mr. Macky taught. I can't remember the director's name now, but I have all those catalogs.

Mitchell: Wasn't it called the Mark Hopkins School at that point?

Schaeffer: No, that was earlier. It was called the California School of Fine Arts. I think it was under the aegis of the university.

Mitchell: I believe it was the art school affiliated with the University of California.

Schaeffer: I remember my official status after I'd been there awhile was professor; I think the last year I was given the title of professor from the University of California. I remember when I went to the Orient that the man who organized the tour insisted on my being called Professor Schaeffer. Somehow or other, I just couldn't quite adjust myself to that title, especially when I was doing the work in the Greek Theatre. Then I was always known as Rudy Schaeffer.

Mitchell: Was Maynard Dixon a teacher at the school?

Schaeffer: Yes, Maynard Dixon and Xavier Martinez, and both Mr. and Mrs. Macky, and I'm trying to think, I know it so well, of the director's name. Bufano, the last year was there.

Mitchell: What was the atmosphere of the school? Was it an exciting place?

Schaeffer: I didn't pay much attention to what was going on in the other departments, I was so absorbed in my department. Mr. Macky said one time, "I don't understand why the students who take Schaeffer's



## ■ CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS ■

THE California School of Fine Arts was founded by the San Francisco Art Association in 1874; in 1893 it was affiliated with the University of California. ■ The School is situated in the San Francisco Institute of Art (formerly the Mark Hopkins Institute) on the corner of California and Mason streets, in the residence district, overlooking the bay of San Francisco.

■ The aim of the school is the development of highest art ideals; a knowledge of what art is and the principles which govern its expression, combined with the practical training that will equip students with the necessary technique to give these ideals expression and make these principles operative in their work. ■ The California School of Fine Arts has a record of which it can be justly proud. Many artists prominent in American Art today have received their training at the School. The students have taken the greater amount of awards in National Competition for many successive years, as well as a majority of local competitive awards. ■ The splendid museum of art conducted by the San Francisco Art Association in the Palace of Fine Arts, Exposition Grounds, is open for study and, to further their progress, students of the School are cordially invited and urged to make use of its valuable and varied permanent collections as well as the changing exhibitions of painting and

CALIFORNIA  
SCHOOL OF  
FINE ARTS

SUMMER  
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SUMMER SESSION FACULTY

LEE F. RANDOLPH, Director of the School — Figure Painting, Composition and Anatomical Sketch Class.  
 E. SPENCER MACKY, CONSTANCE L. MACKY—Portrait Painting and Life Drawing and Painting in the Night School.  
 GOTTARDO PIAZZONI — Landscape Painting and Composition.  
 MAYNARD DIXON—Illustration.  
 GERTRUDE PARTINGTON ALBRIGHT — Sketching, Pen and Ink and Etching Class.  
 RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER — Decorative Design and Handicrafts.  
 EMIL GREBS—Commercial Art and Lettering.  
 ALICE B. CHITTENDEN—Saturday Classes.  
 ARMIN C. HANSEN, Instructor of Monterey Summer School.

SUMMER PRIVILEGES

The advantages for art study in this section of California are well known. Chief among them may be mentioned: the wonderful and healthful climate; the rare natural beauties of the country; sunshine and flowers in profusion; ideal conditions for out of door work; easy access to the ocean shore, than which there is no finer marine painting to be found in the world.

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Schaeffer: course are better portrait painters than those in my class, he doesn't teach or do portraits." But it was because they understood color. He couldn't understand because there was a great cleavage between the fine arts and the decorative arts all through the country.

There was this wave of crafts that had swept over the country in furniture and all kinds of things. The Stickney furniture, the Greene and Greene brothers in Pasadena who had craftsmen do all their lighting fixtures and their metalwork--everything was done by individual craftsmen. This was quite a challenge to the fine arts people, and still its echo is happening right now in the Schaeffer School, with this new man who was trained in fine arts. I was a product of that early turn-of-the-century craft movement. I was instilled in that.

Mitchell: What was the difference there, can you put your finger on it?

Schaeffer: Yes. The idea was to paint pictures, and at that time they were painting from nature, realistic or interpretive, and it could be beautiful, no question about that, portrait and sculpture. Of course in sculpture they were working from casts and drawing from casts too, which later was abandoned for more creative work, naturally. So there was this cleavage between painting pictures to hang on the walls of homes and galleries, and making art to use.

Rudolph Schaeffer often made this statement: "Let us take art out of the golden frame on the wall, and put it into daily life, put art on our dining tables, into our clothes, and our living rooms. There's where art should flourish today. There's nothing wrong with painting pictures and having pictures on the wall, but let's bring art into daily life."

That was my credo. That was the credo on which I founded the school, and it still is the credo of the school today. True, we do abstract decoration for the color music for the walls. (I call it "color music.") It doesn't have to have subject matter, although the subject matter makes it very interesting. But there's a difference between, you might say Wagner and Bach, see? There's a place for Bach music, there's a place for Wagner music, for Debussy, et cetera.

Mitchell: The pure attitude of fine arts, that pure attitude toward art, can get very airless and arrogant.

Schaeffer: Oh yes, I felt the arrogance in that school. But it was largely neutralized by the fact that my classes were sometimes ninety strong, and the portrait classes were fifteen, so there was a big shakeup about this.



Stage Design for Sam Hume

Schaeffer: Sam Hume, who was the director of drama at the University of California, saw my exhibition. He said, "Schaeffer, I want you to do some stage sets for me." He liked the abstract idea, and so that fall, with the students, I did Merry Wives of Windsor, Romeo and Juliet, and a number of Shakespeare plays. For Midsummer Night's Dream I hung cheesecloth drapery, which I dipped in dye, and made all kinds of mottled effects on this and hung it from the cornice down to the floor, in folds so it gave the impression of tree trunks. I had sort of hoops at the top so that they came down in great folds like tree trunks. Then from an upper row of seats far away, I projected with what we called a lantern slide then. Instead of regular slides, they were much bigger, about four inches long and maybe three inches wide, very much bigger, and I cut out an all-over pattern of stencil of tiny leaves, and I projected these slides onto these trees, so it gave the impression of a great forest. And that was my setting.

Norman Edwards did the costumes for that. We really worked together on the costumes, the ideas. The dancers that came out for the dance, instead of being the regular ballet costumes with the little fru-fru skirts sticking out from the hip, we did the tight dresses for them, which were made out of a kind of crinoline. They were dipped in dark violet dye. When we took them out of the dye bath, we made it into a long string so that when they put this skirt on, it clung to the dancers' hips and their legs, and also their legs were painted the same color. The bodice was gray with great black scrolls of design. Then the headdresses were enormous, great tall headdresses which were done on a frame covered with Chinese gold paper. When they emerged from these tree trunks, their lower extremities faded into the background and they looked like phantoms floating out of the dark forest and moving rhythmically to the music, because you were only conscious of from the knees up.

Mitchell: What happened to all of that stuff?

Schaeffer: I don't know what became of it. The next day I was on something else. I never even got a picture of it. It's only now in my mind, in my imagination.

Mitchell: So you and Norman Edwards collaborated on much of this theatre?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, we collaborated. Later he took over the designing, for the next two years and did all the sets and costumes.







# AIMS OF THE SCHOOL

Most schools of the theatre have been built up about the name and teaching of a single person, or they have presented a curriculum of varied, unrelated courses, from among which the student might select such studies as best suited his inclination. He has been expected and encouraged to specialize. There has been an evident need for a school which should aim to present the subject of the art of the theatre as a whole and give its students a comprehensive survey of the entire field of the theatre, undertaking to build up the man or woman of the theatre, rather than a group of specialists—directors, actors, designers, dancers, etc.

Accordingly, there will be held during the six weeks between June 19th and July 29th, in Berkeley, California, a summer school giving intensive instruction in the various arts and crafts contributory to the art of the theatre. It will be the aim of the school to make its instruction in the main creative, and to enable students to apply their work to actual productions planned for presentation in the Greek Theatre of the University of California. By this means, whatever the student's particular interest or specialty may be, he will not fail to acquire a sense of the activity of the theatre as a whole, rather than as an aggregation of special crafts.



SAMUEL J. HUME



IRVING PICHEL

The instructors are all men qualified to speak with authority in their field and are all genuinely men of the theatre. The courses will all be inter-related and so scheduled that it will be possible for a student to take the entire work of the school. All students are urged to undertake a sufficient variety of courses to ensure their acquiring a thorough understanding of the theatre—its art, its various crafts, and its social philosophy.

Students who satisfactorily complete the work of the school will be granted a certificate by the faculty.

Enrollment will be strictly limited to one hundred selected students. Applications for admittance must be in the hands of the Secretary by March 1, 1922. The fee will be Two Hundred Dollars. The sum of Twenty-five Dollars must accompany the application, to be refunded if the student's application is not granted. If the student is admitted, the remainder of the tuition becomes payable at the opening of the session.

The school will be conducted in the auditorium, stage, classrooms, gymnasium, and laboratories of the Berkeley High School.

*\*\*Inquiries for further information should be addressed to the Secretary, H. H. Brewster, P. O. Box 373, Berkeley, California.*

School of the Art of the Theatre,  
Berkeley, California  
June 19th to July 29th, 1922



# FACULTY

**SAM HUME, DIRECTOR.** Assistant Professor of Dramatic Literature and Art, University of California; Director Greek Theatre, University of California; B.A. Harvard 1913, M.A. Harvard 1914. Director First American Exhibition of Stage Craft 1914; Director Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit, 1916-1918; Director American Pageant Association; Director Drama Season Detroit Symphony Orchestra, September-October, 1921; President Fine Arts Association, University of California; Secretary-Treasurer Western Association Art Museum Directors; Honorary President Drama Teachers Association of California.

**IRVING PICHEL.** Harvard 1914. Author of "On Building a Theatre"; contributor to various publications; lecturer. Stage Manager for James K. Hackett 1916; Stage Manager "Caliban" production, New York, 1916; Associate Director "Caliban," Boston, 1917; Technical assistant to Joseph Urban 1916; Stage Director Los Angeles Little Theatre 1916-1917; Director Artists' Guild Theatre, St. Louis, 1918; Staff Stage Director Shubert Theatrical Company, New York, 1919-1920; Lecturer on Dramatic Art at Leland Stanford University, Summer 1920; Associate Director of Greek Theatre Productions 1920-1921; Associate Director Detroit Symphony Society Drama Season 1921.

**KENNETH MACGOWAN.** Harvard 1911. Dramatic work on *Transcript* senior year and till 1914; then Dramatic and Literary Editor of *Philadelphia Evening Ledger*; Journalist in New York since 1917; Editor *Theatre Arts*; Critic *New York Globe*, *Vogue*; Contributor to *Vanity Fair*, *New Republic*, *Freeman*, *Century*, *Collier's*, etc.; Author of "The Theatre of To-morrow."

**STARK YOUNG.** Educated at the University of Mississippi and Columbia University. Professor of English at Amherst; Editor *Theatre Arts Magazine*; Author of "The Blind Man at the Window," "Guinevere," "Addio, Madretta, and Other Plays"; Contributor to the *New Republic*, *North American Review*, *The Nation*, *The Dial*, the *Yale Review*, *Scribner's Magazine*, etc.; Lecturer.

**JEAN BINET.** Holder of certificate from the Jacques-Dalcroze School of Eurythmics at Hellerau; formerly head of the New York School of Eurythmics; Instructor in Eurythmics, in association with Ernest Bloch, at the Cleveland Conservatory of Music.

**GILMOR BROWN.** Director of the Pasadena Community Playhouse; Instructor at the Drama League Institute, Chicago, 1921; leading player in the Greek Theatre productions of Shakespeare's Falstaff Trilogy, 1920.

**RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER.** Graduate of the Kunstgewerbe Schule Munich—pupil of Batchelder and Johannot. Head of the Department of Design and Color, California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco; Associate Art Director Greek Theatre Productions, University of California; Associate Art Director Detroit Symphony Society Drama, Season 1921.

**NORMAN EDWARDS.** Associate Art Director of the Greek Theatre. Designer of settings and costumes of the Detroit Music-Drama Season.



# COURSES OF INSTRUCTION

## PRODUCTION, PLAY REHEARSAL, ACTING

Laboratory work and occasional lectures. The main part of the work will consist of the actual preparation and performance of one or more plays. Students will be divided into small groups for this course in order that individual instruction may be given.

MR. HUME, MR. PICHEL, MR. BROWN.

## THE MODERN THEATRE

A series of lectures, surveying contemporary movements, tendencies, and principles affecting theatre art in Europe and America. Recent accomplishments in the continental theatre, with a full account of the newest work in the theatre of the Scandinavian countries. Theatre organization here and abroad.

MR. MACGOWAN.

## DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

The technique of play-writing, with special emphasis on the technique of the one-act play. Lectures and discussion of current plays; an account of changes in technique and taste. A discussion of the play in its relation to the technical problems of the playhouse or theatre.

MR. YOUNG.

## COLOR AND DESIGN

Laboratory work and occasional lectures. The designing of stage settings and costumes. Model-making. Textiles, dyeing, batik, stencilling, etc.

MR. SCHAEFFER, MR. EDWARDS.

## EURYTHMICS

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Schaeffer: Here's another thing which might be interesting. In Romeo and Juliet, wasn't there a feud between the House of Capulet and Montague? Well, I had a theory that color on the stage could support action. And Hedwiga Reicher, I did some work with her. (She was the sister of that actor right there. She was in the movies, too. You'll find some record of her.) She supported me in that idea.

Anyway, in Romeo and Juliet, do you remember there's a brawl? This took place down in the forestage of the Greek Theatre. It started with costumes, greenish and yellowish, and then as the brawl increased they became orange and then red and magenta red, and the more people came in the redder they got. [laughter] In their costumes, of course!

Then--it's been so long since I read the play--didn't the Duke of Capulet appear on the scene? He came through the center door of the theatre background, and he was dressed in very straight lines of the theatre background, violet blue and turquoise. When he came in, gradually all the red disappeared entirely. He quelled the brawl, you see, when he came in, and color supported him in his costume.

Mitchell: Why didn't you continue to do more of that sort of thing, Rudolph, or did you?

Schaeffer: The last year Sam Hume got a call from the city planning commission of Detroit, Michigan, which in collaboration with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, was going to put on a series of plays and they wanted Sam Hume to direct those plays. Well, he wanted either I or Norman Edwards to go do the sets and costumes. It wound up that we both went, and Norman was paid a fee, but there wasn't enough fee for both of us, so Sam Hume arranged with the city schools for me to give a course at the same time in color and design to the art teachers.

We met at the museum, and I would give an assignment and then they would bring in their work for criticism. That's how I earned a fee and was able to survive, but I helped do the sets: Norman did the costumes and I did the sets. Up on the third floor here, there is the tapestry that I designed and stenciled for King Henry VIII. Wasn't it King Henry VIII that hid behind the tapestries? I think so. (It's been so long since I read Shakespeare, I'm ashamed of myself.)

Anyway, those sets--there was one set for Pelleas and Mélisande by Maeterlinck. There again I used color and light, to supplement the action, like when Melisande went into the chamber and everything was sunlight and lovely yellow color and when Pelleas came in the light changed to a cold blue, emphasizing his demeanor.



Mitchell: This was using light gels on the theatre lights?

Schaeffer: Yes.

Mitchell: Making the theatre lighting itself, not the fabric, not the color on the stage?

Schaeffer: Yes, and it was to support action and the mood of the play with light. That was something new, a new thing at that time. Later that's been done a great deal, but that was my original idea.

Mitchell: Did you stay in Detroit very long?

#### Return from Leave of Absence

Schaeffer: No. And how I left the California School of Fine Arts was I took a year's leave of absence. Marion Hartwell, who still lives down in Santa Barbara with her sister, took over my work at the California School of Fine Arts. She was trained more as a painter, but she was a combination of painting and crafts, very good. When I came back I didn't go back to California School of Fine Arts, I taught privately when I came back, that winter.

Photographs of the sets and costumes that were taken in Detroit were sent to an international theatre show in Amsterdam, Holland, that following year, and were exhibited in an international show for stage design. I have a Dutch magazine with one of my sets illustrated there, and Norman's costumes, the one with the tapestry, Henry VIII, I think, or was it Merry Wives of Windsor?

Then that summer I had the summer school on Powell Street.

Mitchell: Did that experience doing the summer school convince you to form your own school?

Schaeffer: It was brewing in my mind for years. I never was really satisfied teaching along with the fine arts. They hadn't caught the contemporary spirit at all of Europe, although they were very good artists. Martinez was a very good painter and so was Macky, and they were good teachers in their way. The year before we went to Detroit, Bufano was there too, and Bufano and I were far out moderns [laughter] and these other artists were still very traditional.

Mitchell: Did you bring any of the people from the California School of Fine Arts to your school later on?

Schaeffer: No, no, I was completely divorced.

Mitchell: Just too independent?

Schaeffer: Absolutely, and I must have had a tremendous ego [laughter], which maybe I still have, I don't know. Maybe it is more under control now than it was then.

### Exhibition of Decorative Arts

Schaeffer: Anyway, let's go back to the idea of this cleavage. The Women Artists' Society conceived the idea of putting on a show which would narrow the cleavage between decorative arts and fine arts. I was selected to design the show. Now somewhere there are pictures of that. It was a beautiful, beautiful thing; right in my mind now, I can see it.

Mitchell: What was it like?

Schaeffer: It was put on at the Western Women's Club, in their auditorium. They had a stage at the end of the auditorium, the far end. What I did was to make booths all along the sides for individual designers. I had one booth, and different craftsmen and artists had booths along either side.

At the end it was a stage. I transformed that into a huge bay window, and I designed a leaded glass window which was 20 feet high, and 3 1/2 feet wide, in colored glass, abstract, geometric, just planes of glass, and they alternated as they went up and made the pattern in blues and greens and my warm colors were in magenta and violet. This made a central panel, and then two sides were in sandblasted glass, but it had the geometric design division of those. It made a pattern in line, in transparent line, where the other was translucent. That was lighted from the back. Each panel was set in a box, and the lights shone on the background so it looked as though there was daylight coming through.

As I think about it now, it was unique. I don't know how I happened to design it. I had never done anything at all like this before. I've been away from all that for so long, of really designing things, but I was just full of it at that time.

And then one of my pupils designed a round table which is in our gallery right today. It had a light magnolia top, with dark walnut legs set into the top, and they were triangular. (It's all painted now because the veneer deteriorated, but you can see where the legs are set into the round top.)

Schaeffer: Then on either side of this bay window there were great draperies of chartreuse with gold and silver design on them, an all-over geometric pattern design. I had run across some silver leaf that you just put on with a warm iron, and it stuck on. Welland Lathrop was the one that executed that.

Welland Lathrop, and the Cornish School

Schaeffer: Welland Lathrop was with me as a student. It was about 1930. (And by the way, Welland just passed away. He had a dance studio with Ann Halprin, on Union Street for many years.) He left shortly after doing that exhibition to go up to the Cornish School and study dance. He danced with Martha Graham's company for a while, in New York. He was teaching space design here up until two years ago when he became ill, heart trouble, and then just about a month ago he passed away.

Mitchell: How old was he?

Schaeffer: He must have been in his seventies. I just talked to his wife this morning. Welland over the many years remained my esteemed friend. Our school suffered a great loss when he passed. He was a great teacher as well as a dancer.

Mitchell: So in other words, he was a student of yours and a designer, but he went off into dance?

Schaeffer: Yes, well, I'll tell you how that was. I was always interested in visual rhythm that you expressed in design that the eye would have to follow, what I call visual kinesis--to control what you see so the eye sees it rhythmically. So to support that idea I thought it would be nice to have dancing as an extracurricular subject in the school, contemporary dancing, like Mary Wigman of Europe.

Mitchell: You did mention Ann Mundstock.

Schaeffer: Yes, she taught me rhythmic breathing.

Mitchell: Can you describe that?

Schaeffer: Well, you draw in a long breath, and you let it out with your closed teeth, against your teeth in steps, sss, sss, sss, until the last vestige of breath is out. Then you relax your jaw and air flows in by itself, you don't have to breathe in, the air flows in of itself. And then you repeat that. That consciously establishes a regular rhythm to your unconscious breathing.

Schaeffer: Our emotional feelings can disrupt our breathing and we breathe short and long and short and long and sometimes we even hold our breath, which has a disturbing psychological effect. One of the main reasons why we tire during the day is because we're constantly and emotionally interrupting our breathing. The air is what feeds the blood. Nutrition.

Well, now back to the reason Welland left: I had established, in a previous summer, the art department at Nellie Cornish's School, which in the West was the great contribution in Seattle, along with the Schaeffer School in San Francisco. Cornish had been established some years before by Nellie Cornish. She heard about my work down here, so she came and she met Welland Lathrop, and he wanted to study dance, so she kidnapped him, so to speak, and took him up to teach design. I had been supplying graduate students for the design teachers up in Seattle. He went up to teach design and got free tuition to study with, I think her name was Devji, a dancer. Then he went from there on to New York.

#### Sets and Costumes for Adolf Bolm

Schaeffer: In establishing the art department--that was something--I had the great honor and pleasure of designing the sets and costumes that summer, for Adolf Bolm, the dancer who danced alongside Nijinsky. He had given us a previous summer session there, and then he came back for a second summer session, and he taught dance. I did his sets and his costumes.

The dance of the gargoyles would be a very interesting thing for me to describe.

Mitchell: I would like to hear about it.

Schaeffer: You want to hear it now? [laughter]

Well, the scene opens with a traveler lying asleep in front of the cathedral. To suggest the cathedral, I had it all in outline, done with narrow, long pieces of wood, and then on these peaks, like this, I introduced just a suggestion of little filigree things, just to give a suggestion of Gothic.

Then at strategic points, stuck through the drapery, we made masks of gargoyles, and just put it on their faces like this, the dancers. They were all at different heights, along the roof--on ladders, of course, behind the drapery--and the heads projected through the curtain at strategic points. There must have been six of them, or more, I'm not sure. Anyway, this was to represent the dream of the traveler.



Schaeffer: The gargoyles disappeared off of their places, one by one, and came down on the stage, and danced together. They were in grotesque costumes, along with these masks. They were gruesome-looking creatures, but they were wonderful dancing. Adolf Bolm directed this dance and it was his idea, and by the way, he was terribly pleased with my interpretation in designing the set, which was a great satisfaction to my ego--and my ego was pretty strong in those days.

So the dance proceeded, and pretty soon the archbishop came in with his tall hat and he joined the dance. I had all these wooden lines that stood out as lighter than the darker background, the outline of the cathedral, these long vertical lines, I had them all jointed with hinges, and had wires attached to them so it could be operated from the back. First this buttress here, and another buttress there, and the outline of the door, to the music these would bend and a buttress would kick up here, one up there, the whole cathedral was in dance to the accompanying music.

Mitchell: It sounds marvelous!

Schaeffer: It was, it just raised the roof when people saw the cathedral dancing, moving to this rhythm, the music and the archbishop and the gargoyles all dancing to this music, well it was just too exciting.

Bolm wanted me later to get that set in shape so it could travel on the road, but I never got to it. When I got back to San Francisco I was again so engrossed in the demands of the moment that I just didn't have time to do that. Later, the Bolms lived in Los Angeles, and every time they would come to San Francisco I would take them for long rides and have them to dinner. But he died very shortly after that. She lived on in Los Angeles, but they're both dead now.

Mitchell: I had never heard of them, and now I understand why, because he was short-lived really.

Schaeffer: No, he didn't last long after that. But he was one of the principal dancers.

Nijinsky's daughter lives here in San Francisco; she's been here for years.

Mitchell: Did you meet Miss Nijinsky?

Schaeffer: Yes, she came to the school at Union Street and wanted me to do some drawings or something for her. She had some project, but I never got to work things out with her.

Mitchell: And Nijinsky himself?

Schaeffer: No, I never met him himself. It was only Adolf that stayed in this country; I think the rest of them went back to Russia, or wherever. I think Nijinsky was from Budapest. He went berserk, you know. It was unfortunate.

Mitchell: Did you ever see him dance?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, I saw him in 1917 when they came, and I still have the catalog somewhere.

Mitchell: To make a small digression here, your student Louise Dahl-Wolfe, our mutual friend, talked to me quite extensively about seeing that performance, and what an effect it had on her as an art student at the time.

Schaeffer: It had a great effect on me, too.

Mitchell: She described the connection of all the arts being used, which of course I now see you were doing yourself; the costumes, the stage, the whole thing uniting in the mood of the ballet.

Schaeffer: And what impressed me was that at any point if you were to take a colored picture, it was always a beautiful composition. Everything moved, if one thing moved here, another one's costume moved here. The choreography was just superb. That made a great impression on me, and the color of course. I went to every performance, I didn't miss one.

Mitchell: Adolf Bolm you really worked for in Seattle?

Schaeffer: Yes, at the Cornish School.

Mitchell: And they never brought it down here?

Schaeffer: No, they didn't. He was going to do something in Chicago and that's where he wanted me to do this set for him.

#### California Centennial Windows at the Emporium

Mitchell: Rudolph, we must be definitely crossing over into the period when you founded your school.

Schaeffer: See, that was just before, and that summer when I came back from Detroit, I had my own summer school and that summer I did the

Schaeffer: Emporium windows, the backgrounds, and they took the first prize. It was the California Centennial, and my window won the prize of all the stores that had windows celebrating that.

Mitchell: What did you put in the window? What kind of design did you make?

Schaerfer: I had kind of grill doors, Spanish motif on either side, and there were columns, as I remember now, and on the top there were seated little bears. The floor was great squares of masonite done in alternate black and rich green, and then these interesting grilled designs to suggest wrought iron in simulated black metal. Each window had one of those Spanish-door effects. I was doing modern things, but I could always bring in the historic if I wanted to, but always in an interpretive way, never imitating.

Along with the summer school, and the Emporium windows, for which I earned a fee, I was giving a course in in women's hat design for the Meadowbrook Hat Company, here. They hired me to give a course in line and color to their designers, all the employees who were doing hats. They wanted me to give a course in the aesthetics of line and form.

### Paris

Schaeffer: I earned a good deal of money that summer, and I met a gal who was going to the Paris Exposition, and I got all fired up about going to the Paris Exposition. I'd earned a lot of money and I was just going to go over to the Paris Exposition and come back --I didn't know what I was going to do when I came back, although I had thought of starting my school.

I went off to Paris, expecting to be back in September. The franc was down so low I just had oodles of money to spend, and so I just stayed on and on. Norman Edwards was going to come over and join me. By the way, after the Detroit thing he went to Rochester for the Eastman Theatre to do the prologues, and somewhere there are pictures of all these prologues that he did. I told him when they made the American flag, noi to use the conventional red, white and blue, but it was an off white and a magenta red, and violet blue. [laughter] He presented that on the stage for one of his prologues.

But he sent me money, \$500 that he was going to spend in Europe, he sent it to me to spend instead, so I could stay longer. So I stayed from August through till May when I left Marseilles

Schaeffer: on a freighter and sailed around the Mediterranean and came back to Providence, Rhode Island after this two or three weeks cruise. There were about twelve of us.

Mitchell: Sounds wonderful. So you had almost a year in Europe?

Schaeffer: Yes. I lived in Paris, and I took a course in stage design.

I had Mark Tobey paint my portrait. George White Waters, who did the Lincoln statue in the park in Portland, Oregon, he and his wife were in Paris, and George White Waters did my head, in clay.

When I saw Mark Tobey's portrait, I said, "That looks just like a piece of raw beefsteak. How can you do that?" And the next time I went over to his studio, he'd painted it out. Why was I so ungrateful? Why didn't I have a little more humility and say, "Well, Mark, that's very nice, why don't you let me have that?" And he would have given it to me, and now it would be worth thousands of dollars, you see? But I just passed it off.

Somewhere I had the bust; I had somewhere a portrait of it, but I've lost it. I should have a bronze cast made of that to satisfy my ego inflation. I didn't know then that I was going to be interviewed for this celebrated archive, otherwise I would have nabbed onto these things. [laughter]

Mitchell: So you lived "la vie boheme" in Paris for a year?

Schaeffer: Well, I just had a very simple life, lots of fun. Several San Francisco friends were living in Paris. I bought myself a pair of Belgian skates and I used to go skating. There was a family from Berkeley living there and I used to take the kids skating [laughter]. (Oh yes, I was raised near the water, near a mill pond, so I was a good skater, and I used to go out here when there used to be a skating rink. Then somebody swiped my skates, darn it. I had one with sprockets on the end, and they were fastened permanently to a pair of shoes. I had special shoes for them.)

Then there was Charlie Dutton from Berkeley, and his wife and daughter, and I would see them and be there at their house for dinner. He came back here and committed suicide, Charlie Dutton. Very sad. He was a gifted musician, a teacher of music, in Berkeley. Quite a character. Oh, another generation back knows all these people in Berkeley. Sam Hume, and Irving Pichel who was later in the movies. I worked with him at the Greek Theatre. His clean, fresh, white shirt was always frayed around the collar.



From Grant Avenue to St. Anne Street on St. Mary's Square

Schaerfer: I came back to San Francisco and a young chap had gotten everything all ready for my class. It was in a good-sized back room on a second floor where Saks Fifth Avenue is today [Grant Avenue]. There was an extra little room for an office for interviewing-- and somewhere I have pictures of all that.

I'd been living out at that old house, Old Swish.

Mitchell: But you couldn't go back?

Schaeffer: I'd been living there for twelve years. Actually I continued to live there that first year after I opened my school on Grant Avenue. The following year I got this place on St. Anne Street, and then I moved all my things down there, and I moved that piano.

That piano followed me from Pasadena. Did you know that? When it was new, you could just breathe on it and it would play. It was one of the most wonderful German pianos. In 1911 the Ritter took the international prize. Then the Ritter Piano Company went into war munitions manufacturing in 1914 and they never made another piano. But it was the top piano of the world, above Steinway and all of them. I find it very relaxing to improvise.

Mitchell: When you started your school, would you say that you really started it on Grant or at St. Anne's?

Schaeffer: It began on Grant Avenue, in those two rooms. Then I got this place on St. Anne Street. It was a three-story building. Bertha Lum, an artist who had lived in China and did block prints, Japanese style but Chinese motifs, she had a studio on the 3rd floor front of that building. Frances Wallace, one of my students, took over this studio when Bertha Lum went back to China.

Downstairs in that building was a carpenter's shop, the 2nd floor was a plumber's shop, and the 3rd floor back was a Chinese laundry, but the 3rd floor front was my student's studio and she told me about the building. Gradually I took over the whole building, excepting that 3rd floor front. All of those people moved out, the carpenter, the laundry, everything moving out and the whole building was vacant.

Announcements from the  
late 1920s

RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER  
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136 ST. ANNE STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO

Schaeffer: Over the twenty-five years, I put in many thousands of dollars in remodeling it. I didn't own it, only leased it. After twenty-five years the landlady said, "You know, Mr. Schaeffer, I have fixed it in my will that that building can't be sold till five years after my death. So you're safe there," she said, "with all your improvements that you've put into that building."

Then came World War II, and bomb shelters were the rage throughout the country, digging underneath parks and making garages under parks to be used as bomb shelters, and so this was the fate of that beautiful little St. Mary's Square. Our large front windows looked out on this lovely square. Later the great poplar trees were planted and the Bufano monument placed in their midst.

St. Mary's Square sloped down from Sun Yat Sen and the poplar trees, a beautiful sloping park where the Chinese women and mothers used to bring their children and spread a blanket and have their lunch and sit there in the sun; our students used to go out and sit in the park and enjoy that park. Then the city came along and condemned the whole street, this little St. Anne Street running at the base of the park, and a parking lot for the Stauffer Chemical Company on the other side, and a small hotel at either end of St. Anne Street running from California to Pine.

My building had a very modern look with its great glass window panes like old-fashioned store windows. Each floor had these windows that swung in, and on the whole three floors were these windows, from downstairs up to the top. I painted the casings on the first floor yellow-green, yes, and then green-yellow, and then yellow at the top. I had window boxes on the fire escape. They were very plain fire escapes, with straight thin lines. I had low window boxes painted turquoise with violet and magenta and pink petunias. And there was a man who gave a radio talk every Sunday morning about San Francisco, and he described this building over the radio as being something worthwhile for people to see. [laughter] This was long before the present vogue of painting our old Victorian houses in bright colors.

Mitchell: How long were you there?

Schaeffer: Twenty-five years. Then it was torn down with all the improvements. I had had soundproofing on the ceiling of the first floor. There were twelve-foot ceilings and I had established the East West Gallery on the first floor, which I have lots of clippings of.



Schaeffer: Frankenstein described it as a model for museums because of the way I had planned it, so you'd only see one portion of things at a time: you wouldn't go into a room, a big rectangular room, and get a vision of everything all at once. When you went in you saw this section, then you went a little farther and you saw another section as you went around. I'll show you pictures.

Mitchell: So that was a space that you actually designed? What color was it?

Schaeffer: The inside?

Mitchell: Yes.

Schaeffer: Oh, a neutral color, because I exhibited things against a neutral color. The stairs, the second floor, I'd have to show you a picture, but the stairway leading up to the second floor was red-orange. At the head of the stairs there was a Chinese textile echoing the same color. It was very colorful.

### Collecting

Mitchell: Rudolph, those early days of the school introduced you directly to Chinatown and became your environment. When did you start collecting pieces?

Schaeffer: Chinatown was then just a few blocks on California Street. I started collecting things when I was at California School of Fine Arts, some but not so much, bowls and dishes and things like that, for showing practical examples of color to students. I was always very dish-minded. Anything, a container, ceramics, glass, pottery. When I got to teaching color really was when I would go shopping to Chinatown. There was nothing on the American market, only brown, tan, navy blue, and green, just ordinary drab colors, but in Chinatown there would be this whole sequence of prismatic color, beautiful magenta, turquoise, violet-blue, chartreuse, all these gorgeous colors. And also soft, beautiful neutral colors too, but not drab. But I couldn't afford to get yards of each one. I would get maybe a quarter of a yard, of this or that color. I still have those colors and teach with them.

Did you see Bob de Roos's article in the Sunday Examiner when he visited the school?

Mitchell: Yes, I did, it was a good article.



Schaeffer: I was showing those colors that morning.

Mitchell: Do you use them still in teaching?

Schaeffer: Oh, yes, of course.

Mitchell: I must come a day when you do that.

Schaeffer: I put things together, you see. I have a faculty of just dropping things together harmoniously. [laughter]

### Intuition, Right and Left Brain

Mitchell: Do you think that comes naturally? Or do you think that you've learned it?

Schaeffer: Naturally, intuitively; but of course with the intuitive flash the reasoning mind cooperates.

Mitchell: Can anybody learn it?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, you can learn the reasoning principles of harmony. You see, up until the teaching of Dow, just before the turn of the century, artistic creation or expression was a matter of intuition --plus principles of construction, of course. Dow taught the principle of reason and of course my teaching has been greatly influenced by Dow in this respect. Dow was the first important artist and teacher whose criticism was based on reason.

Mitchell: How did it work?

Schaeffer: His criticism was mainly criticizing composition of masses, dark and light masses, for he was essentially a painter. And one of the great principles was subordination. The opposite would be dominance, you see. They were so logical that no student could refute them. That's how the criticisms were at the California School of Fine Arts, at the time I was there. That's why my classes were so large. The students found something to hold on to that they agreed with. They couldn't disagree with the logical reasoning criticism.

I have combined in my teaching feeling with reason. The strength of the school's teaching today is the totality of the two hemispheres of the brain, the one that is the reasoning side, and the other that is the intuitive side. Just recently a new extension of that idea has come to my mind. The right side of

Schaeffer: the brain, the intuitive, the feeling for unity, bringing things together, this side is connected with the cosmic universal vibration; it is, if you can develop a consciousness of it, in tune with a cosmic vibration. The left side of the brain is in tune with nature, sense phenomena, with sound and light, touch, taste and smell, the essential things of physical nature. The spiritual and aesthetic side is from the functions of the other side. And when the two mesh together, and coordinate simultaneously, then we have the creative act of beauty, art expressing the spirit of man.

Mitchell: Would you say that the side that people are always talking about as intellectual is really the side on which your spiritual--

Schaeffer: The intellectual is the reasoning, is the opposite side. And the content, the spiritual content, is from the right side.. And that is what, in my teaching, I have always to bring into the focus of consciousness. And more than that, they must develop. It's folly to try to do beautiful expression in textiles, in color schemes, in painting, in interior, or whatever, expressing beauty of color, unity, harmony, rhythm, balance, all of those principles, and not practice them in daily life, spiritually, mentally.

To be engrossed in all the vulgar, filling the mental pictures of vulgarity and all the things that're going on like in San Francisco among young people today. Filth! I never realized until in recent years, it's told to me, the utter vulgarity and the filth that goes on today in San Francisco. The lowest of the low, and at the same time we have the most spiritual-minded organizations and institutions and people like Howard Thurman, late minister of the Fellowship Church on Hyde Street, the black man. You know of him, he's one of the most precious people, and then Dr. Chaudhuri, who just passed on. There are just legions of wonderful spiritually-minded people in San Francisco.

Mitchell: I was thinking we might take a few seconds to talk a little bit about this comment that Mr. Macky made\* about his own teaching. He said he just wonders if it's possible to teach art at all. He posed this question, he never answered it.

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\*See Macky, Eric Spencer and Macky, Constance, "Reminiscences of Eric Spencer Macky and Constance Macky," typescript of an oral history conducted 1954 by Corinne L. Gilb and Paul Mills, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1954, iv, 121 p.

Schaeffer: No you can't teach art, only about it, to appreciate art. I know that you can't teach it, but you can awaken people to the need to do creative work, the desire to be creative, and awaken them to see, to open their eyes to see the world of nature about them. That's what you can do. And when they see not only with the eyes, but mentally, they'll want to create. And you can interest them in principles of reasoning so that what they create has a universal appeal rather than just being a personal expression.

There's much awareness that can be awakened. It's all there, in the individual, you don't have to add anything on, it's all there. It's only the individual must become aware and receptive to relate to what is out there. And nature is full of it. You don't have to create a beam of light, it's already there, and when that light shines through that prism [on the window in Rudolph Schaeffer's cottage], and shines on the floor here--you should be here in the afternoon--it makes a gorgeous rainbow across the floor.





INTERVIEW 5: April 9, 1981

Schaeffer: I have a newspaper article that I think I can put my hand on, and you can take it along. The title is, "Design in Your Life."

Mitchell: It's all coming true now, in theory anyway.

Schaeffer: I guess I was one of the pioneers in that idea, here on the coast anyway. Of course the great aesthetic revolution had taken place in Europe, which was just that! This was the credo of the modern revolution, bringing design into the daily life, everything.

#### A Review of Influences

Mitchell: What had been your relationship, if any, to the Bauhaus people?

Schaeffer: It wasn't until later that I learned of the Bauhaus and its astonishing credo, "form follows function." I was certainly influenced by it and studied all their publications in German. (Their publications hadn't been in English yet.)

I'll tell you what was still in my mind was the influence of the Vienna workshops and my contact with Joseph Hoffman, the famous architect of Austria. Hoffman took me into one of his houses where all the furniture, the furnishings, the dishes, were all designed in harmony, even the lady's gown, the hostess's gown, was from fabrics from the Vienna workshop, so everything sort of harmonized together. All of these things had been designed in the same spirit, and it made a profound impression upon me.

In a small way I wanted to attempt something like that with my school. From what I had to offer, it was quite a venturesome idea, I think. But I wanted to have a school where I just had a few students that I could control, and teach them my theories of color and design and then we'd do a project, like we took on interiors and then we took on special decorations in stores and homes, as I mentioned.

Schaeffer: For example, at the Emporium, say there was going to be a new dress goods department, or one time they put in a new beauty parlor, that's when I had the sheets and pillow cases all dyed a special color. There was no colored bedding on the market at that time. Then too, we colored tablecloths, and it was the beginning of the vanishing of white tablecloths, and Battenberg lace, and all of that fancy stuff.

We dyed tablecloths and napkins at the school in sequences of color, so when we'd have a tablecloth, a luncheon cloth, then the napkins would be in harmonious contrasts. It's more or less common today on an average lady's table, but that was all new then. Nobody ever heard of a colored tablecloth. Oh, in Europe, maybe blue checks and red checks. Bullock's store in Los Angeles followed suit in the luncheon restaurant.

Many eyes were on the Schaeffer School at that time, for new ideas in color and design. Buyers came out from New York and visited the school at that time, looking for new ideas. I don't mean to say this boastingly, but the influence of color and design centered in the school, during the late twenties, thirties, and forties. Those were the great days when all this was a new thing out here on the coast, and I was the leader of it.

#### No-Tan and Principles from Eastern Art

Mitchell: What kind of curriculum did you present your students? Maybe you'd start with the concept of no-tan that you've talked about.

Schaeffer: Well, no-tan is merely composing. Instead of doing a design floating on a background, no-tan was a matter of making the background vital, the dark areas enclosed with light areas and vice versa, so the light spaces, the negative spaces were in an alternating balance, and to the eye the light spaces were visually as important as the dark in an abstract sense. For instance, there might be flowers or leaves, distributed over a surface but if they were designed over the surface dark against light, the light spaces, the light areas were meaningful. Not just a design floating on a background, but a design with a structure of dark and light areas. That is the spirit of no-tan and no-tan comes from the Japanese word merely meaning dark-light, as a hyphenated noun, not dark and light, but dark-light.

Mitchell: The no-tan comes from the Japanese? Where did you find it?

Schaeffer: No-tan came also from Dow<sup>®</sup>, and Dow got it from the Japanese.

Mitchell: But you probably put your own stamp?

Schaeffer: Yes.

Mitchell: How?

Schaeffer: I don't really know how any more. Those things, so many things in those days, I always said were told to me intuitively from "the other side," from the invisible.

Mitchell: What about the idea of yin-yang? That's the first symbol I think of in no-tan.

Schaeffer: Yin and yang means the harmony of all contrasts, and it happens that black and white are the greatest contrast, the creative polarity, that we have in our world of seeing. So therefore yin and yang are represented by black and white. And in a sense it's equal, the black is equal to the white, but there's always a germ of light in the dark, and a little germ of dark in the light. That's why there's that little dot in the dark and the little dot in the light, so that there is never any complete divorcement in the dark and light.

What developed over the years in the school was based upon that fundamental idea of contrast. So early in my teaching I came to the conclusion that I had to put that principle of transition into function, in design and color. The idea of transition from black to white, from contrast to contrast, from pole to pole, that became the intellectual essence of the teaching. To this day. And it's very difficult to get that over to the students, that transition in between two poles. I've concentrated a great deal on it especially in color contrast, how yellow and blue make great contrast of value and hue, but there's a transition in between, green comes in between on one side of the color wheel.

Mitchell: So that you've applied that concept to color?

Schaeffer: Yes. That's why I called my system of teaching rhythmo-chromatic. You can visualize black, white, and in between an infinite number of colors of grey. You can make a shading from black to white. But you could also take that shading and put it in steps, maybe 50 steps between, or 25 steps or 15 steps, or 10 steps. You can shorten the steps, you see, but always evenly spaced along, till you come to only one step, which is the middle--dark-middle-light, on which most Japanese painting is based. Many times it is four

Schaeffer: values: because of the white paper, the white background, they'd use a dark and middle gray and a light gray against a light background of the paper.

So that's the essence of Oriental art, the transition in between. You find it in nature. You find it in the growing things in nature. You'll find the opening of a bud, gradually it opens and the petal gets bigger and bigger. It varies in size, minuscule here, gigantic over here, but in between is all this gradation. You bring the idea from light, you bring it into size. We're talking about dark and light, now we're talking about size. And it applies to every contrast of visual impact, every kind of contrast. The Chinese call this concept rhythmic vitality.

Mitchell: What you're saying is that it really is a continuous thing?

Schaeffer: Yes, a continuum, and always in design you increase or decrease. That gives the vitality to a design.

Mitchell: What kinds of exercises or projects did the students have to experience it?

Schaeffer: These would be difficult to describe in words without specific examples. That's what I'm trying to get into printed form for my book.

Mitchell: Now this was the period when you put your prismatic color theory into actual teaching for your students. You had begun that back in 1917, to start with. But what did you do with that theory when you brought it to your own school? How did it fit into the curriculum?

Schaeffer: I simply continued developing and clarifying what I started at the California School of Fine Arts. They had to paint these sequences in lineal order. They had to make a color wheel, which is a lineal sequence, in a circle. With various related hues they would compose, play one color against another, choosing contrasts from the sequence, always playing with the transition in between the strongest contrasts. And that is not practiced generally by colorists. The nearest one that comes to that is Paul Klee.



Paul Klee

Mitchell: I never think of Paul Klee as a colorist.

Schaeffer: I think he was one of the greatest colorists of the 20th century.

Mitchell: I think of him really in terms of his linear drawing.

Schaeffer: Yes. I must show you. I have a whole portfolio of his linear drawings, of course reproductions, no color at all, but he understood these color values and intensities I believe much better than Kandinsky and Feininger. Of the three, Paul Klee was the greatest colorist. Some of his color abstractions to me are visual music. Most of our artists just play color contrast around, whatever they feel is good looking and gives a more or less emotional effect, which is all right. I have no quarrel with it, but it's not the whole thing.

Mitchell: It's as though they play a certain amount of scales on the piano in a certain range, but they don't incorporate another subtle ability to play the keys and express more out of the piano.

Design: Contrast, Transition and Repetition

Schaeffer: That would be a good way of expressing it. Yes. You see what contrast only does, it pinpoints attention. That's how we see. As I look around, I fasten my attention on different things, but if there was something against that wall that was the same color, if I put a disc on there against the wall that was the same color as the wall, I would have to look pretty hard to see it.

Now, what sustains one's attention to the contrast, what sustains one's interest, is when the contrast is harmonized; by an element of color in between the two poles of contrast, a transition, the eyes are led from one to the other.

Mitchell: Can you give me an example in color, of what would do that?

Schaeffer: When your eye is led from one impression to another, it's more pleasing. In the transition there's a repetition, of both poles, and the eye delights in repetition. But at the same time it delights in change as the repetition takes place. For instance, you're driving down the highway--or maybe somebody else is driving, because they have to watch the road. You're sitting there, and

Schaeffer: you're taking in all the sights, this thing and that thing, and all are heterogeneous, and there's no order to these visual impressions at all. But just as soon as you see some order, a row of trees, repetition, your eyes take that in. And the eye delights in that order.

Well, that's something like repetition in design, and composition, you have to have some element repeating, along with contrast and change. Those trees, they could have been a gradation of sizes, they could have changed in size, or in color, and be even more pleasing, like McLaren did out at Golden Gate Park. He'd plant a very large leaf tree, then there'd be a medium size leaf, and then there'd be some fine leaves. Transition, from one to the other, rather than putting a great palm leaf, and then having some little tiny leafed thing beside it.

Mitchell: Oh, now I really see it, yes.

Schaeffer: That is what I call visual rhythm. There you have a three-year course in fifteen minutes. [laughs] This is the thing, it's just interesting, but if you wanted to put it in practice, you'd have to learn step by step and perform each step. Learn by doing. It's just like starting music, you have to be guided by a teacher step by step until it becomes a function in your mind and in your hand, in your doing.

Mitchell: Could you make more specific comments about what was unusual about prismatic color?

### Color: History and Theory

Schaeffer: Most artists up until the turn of the century based all their color on the mixture of the basic pigments, of red, blue, and yellow, and made a color wheel by mixing those pigments. When you came to the sequence between red and blue, you might have had some purple, and there was purple dye, and then there was crimson dye, but these were all either organic or mineral dye. The color sequence was based upon moving from blue to yellow through green and from yellow through red to blue. Red, blue and yellow were the primary pigments.

After German scientists perfected their dyes from coal tars, it was discovered that red, green, and blue vibrations of light were the three primaries in light impinging on the retina of the eye singly or in combination, which caused all visual color sensation, and countless variations, and only the trained eye begins to see these countless variations.

Schaeffer: So the difference between the pigment mixture of red, blue and yellow on the artist's palette is the mixture of color reflected from a surface combining on the retina of the eye. Light on the eye, palette mixed or combined somewhat differently, then pigments of the same colors on a wooden palette.

For instance, red and green light vibrations result in yellow. I need not call attention to the mixing of red and green. Mud? All three pigment primaries combined--red, blue, yellow--make a muddy black, where the three primaries of light prismatic color combined produce white.

Of course all of this is common knowledge today. The pointillist artists of Europe exploited this theory eloquently early in this century. I have a sneaky hunch that Monet didn't have exactly that clearly in mind, because he didn't always get nice clear color. Some of his color is muddy to my notion.

Mitchell: Those artists were experimenting and playing around with those ideas.

Schaeffer: Yes, experimenting and putting little dots of color.

Well, I put that whole theory for the first time into weaving, and I trained Dorothy Liebes and all of her workers in color. That was the beginning of color in hand weaving. All the hand weaving up until the Schaeffer School, 1930, was based, here on the coast, on Swedish weaving with white warp. Schaeffer dyed all the warp, so that it became an integral part of the color scheme, of the color texture.

Mitchell: You created different color harmonies than you could have possibly created if you kept it white?

Schaeffer: Yes. And that's why we originally had weaving in the school as color study. But so many things, my dear, so many things have been eliminated, eliminated, and sometimes I wake up at night and I think about it and I weep, because the school today sometimes I think it's a shadow of what it was at one time.

Mitchell: But Rudolph, you have to realize that that's true of many, many institutions that are trying today to educate and they are not functioning well. Probably you're thinking on a scale of one to ten, most institutions are about at two, and you're probably at six. For you want it to be where it used to be at ten. But I do think part of it is that another generation does come along, and suddenly sees the spirit of it again. And this is why I want very much for the oral history to be done and for you to be on video.

Schaeffer: This is why next year I should really concentrate on the publication of this. There's nothing published.

Mitchell: My feeling personally is, yes, a book is nice, but numero uno is to do a film, a series of educational style films.

Schaeffer: Yes, Gretta, you are right about change. In place of some of these eliminations which were so important earlier, other phases of design and color have been emphasized, space design and a tremendous development in flower arrangement with a beautiful room designed and built especially for flower arrangement.

Spiritual values have had greater emphasis because of my more mature years, and my teaching is perhaps even more effective coming from a vast background of experience in both teaching and performance. So, away with tears for the past.

#### Ching Wah Lee

Mitchell: Now we are looking at the East West Gallery book.

Schaeffer: My interest began with oriental things when I first came to California, and when I started this school that's when I met Ching Wah Lee for the first time.

Mitchell: Just for a minute, can you tell who he was?

Schaeffer: He was Chinese, San Francisco-born, and as a young man he was in the movies and was in Pearl Buck's movie, The Good Earth. He was the young man in that and that's where he made considerable money. He invested most of this money in Chinese artifacts. He had been a student, graduate, of the University of California in anthropology, of all things, he was naturally interested in historical things, and interested in Chinese historical art, so he made a big collection and I met him in those early days of the 1930s.

By the 1940s he was teaching at the Schaeffer School, and was one of the first to motivate interest in Oriental art in San Francisco. He should be given much more credit than he has. Kevin Wallace wrote a very nice article about him, several months ago. You see, he just died, in January of last year. Anyway, he stimulated my interest in the historical things, especially ceramics, and so out of that influence I felt I should have a little gallery and so I converted part of the first floor of the St. Anne Street school into a little gallery which I



Schaeffer: called East West Gallery where I alternated exhibitions--which this book will show--exhibitions of Oriental art and then followed with contemporary design, and color. That's why I called it the East West Gallery.

I founded what I called the East West Arts Foundation, and had memberships, active \$5, contribution \$25, sustaining \$50, and then up until \$1000, and a board of trustees. Later, when I incorporated it, then I called it the Rudolph Schaeffer Foundation. Later foundations seemed to be connected with money, and giving money; I was talked out of the idea of a foundation. Today I'd be most happy to have it called again foundation, because I have the substance for it and because I'm going to endow my children's library, and it should come from the Rudolph Schaeffer Foundation. And the school will be endowed too, because the collection, when it's sold, will bring in a whale of a lot of money.

#### The Rudolph Schaeffer Collection

Mitchell: What does your collection now consist of?

Schaeffer: The ceramic collection is unique, because I collected it from the standpoint and my appreciation of contemporary color and design, rather than mixing a lot of curios, you see. There are many collectors, many, and they collect with the idea of historical significance which of course is very interesting. Ching Wah had an example of every kiln from earliest time down to the present day, but not all those things had really fine design character.

In every period, not all the things were of good design. Even in the European, some things you wouldn't have in your woodshed. But not so much in Chinese; it was uniformly much sounder in design down through the centuries. (Because Ching Wah Lee, unfortunately, made no will, his collection was sold a few months ago at Sotheby's. It sold for more than a million dollars!)

Chinese are always holding to the universal, where European design often times held to the personal, and individual expression. And that's what has made my collection, according to connoisseurs, unique in the world of collectors. That's why I'm working on the catalogue, and I'm hoping we can finance it out of the sale of our Bodhisattva which we've sold--which had been given to the school.

Now I don't want to put that money to go just to pay the school gas bill, or the electric bill, et cetera. That has to go into a fund that's going to be worthwhile, more lasting.

Mitchell: And this all started in the days of the St. Anne's school?

Schaeffer: Yes, and this was the first organization in San Francisco for Oriental art. And out of these students, these people that listened to Ching Wah, was the nucleus of the Asian Art Society. Not many people realize that, excepting those people who were right there attending Ching Wah's lectures. Here's a letter written by Mrs. Ferdinand Smith--she just died a few weeks ago: Rudolph Schaeffer, Director; Alice Putman Brewer, Associate Director; Ching Wah Lee, Research and Oriental Art; and then here's the East-West Council. I had a council: John J. Cuddy, Mrs. Hubert A. Dafoe, Mrs. Charles DeYoung Elkus, Ruth Garth, William Gaskin, Rose Pauson, Mrs. Ralph A. Reynolds, Mrs. Ferdinand C. Smith, Mrs. R.I. Tweety and Esther Waite. Many of these people are known in San Francisco, and some have long passed away.

Mitchell: I think that letter should be part of it, yes, read it.

Schaeffer: I won't read it all, but, "Early this year Rudolph Schaeffer opened the East West Arts Gallery to the public. The purpose of the gallery is to show that the understanding and appreciation of Oriental art may be aesthetically integrated with contemporary creative design..." You see, that's a very good thing, there.

Mitchell: So the place became a focus for this sort of activity, for lectures and events, as well as exhibits?

Schaeffer: Yes, exhibits and lectures on Oriental art as well as on contemporary design. (I still have these doors, you see in the photographs. When they would overlap then they'd make the most interesting patterns.)

Mitchell: The doors, how are they constructed? They're panels of wood with a series of circular holes in them.

Schaeffer: I had a great time with the carpenter getting those made.

This announces the opening. There's that group of figures that are up there: form and color. Chinese ceramic sculpture. Frankenstein wrote very complimentary things about it.

### Flower Arranging

Mitchell: Now here we're getting a little bit into flower arranging.

Schaeffer: That was all a part of this show. These were branches from Edgewood Avenue, those Hungarian plum trees. They were trimming them and I picked up all these branches and put them in water.

Schaeffer: Alternating with the figurines, I have these branches, and as they arched over the figurine they made a space for the figurine on the shelf. It was beautiful.

And this dragon, I've just sold it to Harry Donlevy.

Mitchell: You've got plants around it, too.

Schaeffer: That was placed down the middle gallery. I wish I had bought those. They were great Phoenixbirds on either side the sliding doors.

Mitchell: So you were introducing the flowers as part of the concept, but when did you start to actually become involved with flower arranging?

Schaeffer: When I was about six years old. [laughter]

Mitchell: I knew you were going to say that. I asked for that, didn't I? [laughter]

Schaeffer: Even at the California School of Fine Arts, in all my exhibitions, there were always flowers. Louise Dahl-Wolfe would tell you how I combined the deep pink geraniums with orange marigolds!

Mitchell: Yes, she says you did that a lot. She couldn't believe it.

Schaeffer: She remembers it well.

Mitchell: [looking at photograph] Now, this is interesting, because this is the interior design of ten houses. And a model.

Schaeffer: Jack Campbell and Worley Wong were the first ones in this area who did contemporary houses. Greene and Greene had been doing things in Pasadena, bungalows, but the first contemporary architecture was done here by Campbell and Wong in this area.

Mitchell: And were they students of yours?

Schaeffer: Campbell, yes. I tell you the school had a tremendous influence in the early days, which few people realize--until they read the record of Rudolph Schaeffer ego operating! The students now that come to this school, they only know the school of 1980 and 1981, and perhaps a few years earlier, and of my work they know nothing.

Mitchell: Well, this is why we want to be sure we discuss specific aspects of that influence, like this architectural designer, Campbell. He was a student at the Rudolph Schaeffer School?

Schaeffer: Yes, he studied with me in the late 1930s. He's a wonderful designer, and a very good lecturer. Oftentimes students have all this Schaeffer training and everything, and then they can't teach it. I believe real teaching is a gift and can't be learned.

Mitchell: Teaching is also an art form.

Schaeffer: Don't I know! And now this is "Nature and the Chinese Eye."  
(Another exhibition notice in the book.)

[pause to get another book] Here was the entrance to the St. Anne Street building. There was a little block down there where I always had a flower arrangement, as you entered the school. That was traditional, from the very beginning. These last few months I'm afraid there was no flower arrangement in the front hall here, for the first time, for the first time.

Mitchell: You shouldn't feel guilty, Rudolph.

Schaeffer: I feel sad, at the point of tears. You know what I did this morning? Marty, my present helper, had gone to the flower market yesterday morning and got some flowers. (He's a very fine student, capable, does lots of things, and he'd do more if he had more time.) This morning I got up early, I was up over there at half past seven, and I did the flower arrangement and then I felt better indeed.

I must tell you this story. In ancient times there was this Chinese general who, after a great battle had been fought and won, sat in his tent, clapped his hands for an attendant, and said, "Bring me a basin and some flowers. I want to do a flower arrangement to refresh my mind and body." This is why I frequently do a flower arrangement. I haven't been teaching it lately, but am scheduled for a class early in 1982. I'm glad about that.

Mitchell: I'll photograph your arrangement.

Schaeffer: All right, do that. It's in honor of the Year of the Rooster. I had that turquoise rooster that was out here in with some blue iris, and I did this because on Monday they're having a meeting of about twenty of the City Art Commission here, also the Asian Art Commission. They have their meetings around different places, and so the chairman asked me some months ago if they could meet here.



Floor Plan of St. Anne Street School

Mitchell: Let's look at these pictures. (The book of pictures of the St. Anne Street school building.) This was the school.

Schaeffer: This was the downstairs.

Mitchell: With nice office space?

Schaeffer: Yes. We had two offices, there was a receptionist here, and then this was the office for the costume design teacher. This was the second floor. This was the little nook for the library, this was looking out at Sun Yat Sen.

Mitchell: The statue was right opposite in the park.

Schaeffer: Yes. This was my inner office. And this was at the top of the stairs, a piece of driftwood. This was the second floor, and this was the scene of many of the performances, musicals, and readings and exhibitions, which would appeal to a small group of people. There was no small intimate place at that time in San Francisco where a group of about one hundred people could be seated, and so the school became a center for contemporary art, poetry reading, and exhibitions, and especially musicals. Henry Cowell played his first San Francisco concert there. There was always something in the Sunday paper about these events.

Mitchell: So it was a place where the newest things were happening in the arts.

Schaeffer: The avant garde.

Mitchell: That was you.

Schaeffer: Yes. I guess so.

Mitchell: You still are, in your way.

Schaeffer: Most all the people that were associated with, that knew about this, are gone. I've outlived them. One thing--I never wanted to talk much about it, because it would sound as though I was boasting--but really as I look back, I was an instrument. I was one of the instruments for this particular movement, especially here on the coast.

Now that's another picture. There's the piano. I never forgot how a very lovely flower arrangement was on the piano and some unaware--visually unaware--lady came in and she plunked

Schaeffer: down her hat and her gloves, practically on top of that flower arrangement. I sometimes am reminded of that when I make a flower arrangement in the hall and here comes a student and puts his empty plastic coffee cup right down in front of it.

[back to the book] Here was my studio on the 3rd floor back, and that chest of drawers I still have in my bathroom. This is a Chinese painting, there's this Chinese bronze. I had a desk for each kind of activity. I always had several things going at one time.

If you go in the garden room, there on the table is one tulip. I have to have a flower on my lecture table. The flower gives me inspiration. Perhaps I'm a bit like George Washington Carver. Flowers talked to him. This is traditional, there have to be one or two flowers on my lecture table.

This was the entrance to my studio, and then I had an extra bedroom here, so I could put up a guest, and there's that Chinese thing again, tower (pagoda).

Mitchell: With a huge wonderful set of plants, like trees.

Schaeffer: This was downstairs again, in that big room, and there was an alcove off that room, and I was giving a course in interior. Then each Wednesday--I had a free day Wednesday--I made a table setting, on this. It was a table that was kind of based on a Japanese bridge, two rectangles that shifted, and on the division where it shifted I had a piece of glass, cut just the size and then it had a piece of colored material underneath. This unified the two tables.

Here's the Varda which now hangs here on my wall. In back of those drapes, there were shelves for my Tang collection. This page goes down to the East West Gallery. Now this is an exhibition of Chinese prints at the gallery. See, I had some prints on eye level and others on sitting level and I had little stools that people could shove along and sit down. And there's that rock that's out here in the garden. That is in the center.

Mitchell: How was all of this financed?

Schaeffer: I don't know, things didn't cost so much in those days. You could do wonderful things for \$10. [laughter] Anyway, I spent all my earnings in the school--the extension of myself. Today it's unthinkable how much things cost. Now, you see, that's the Campbell show. This was the textile show, contemporary textiles by California designers. Here's a Chinese ceramic exhibition,

Schaeffer: monochromes, some are mine and some were Ching Wah Lee's. See how I arranged those things? That plate is over on the piano, happens to be there now.

Mitchell: And Chinese painting. .

Schaeffer: That's a conversation between a bamboo and a rock. See how they're having a conversation? The rock is reaching up, and this bamboo is reaching down. They're talking, and whispering together, and the moon is listening.

### Teaching with Models

Schaeffer: Here's another thing. We were one of the first schools in the country to teach interior with models. All the well-known schools, Parsons School, New York School of Fine and Applied Art, were teaching interior by making hypothetical renderings of period rooms. I was doing modern rooms with 3-D models.

Mitchell: Do you still have your students do models?

Schaeffer: Up until recently. Now I can't get them to do it, I can't get a teacher to teach it. Last year the new associate director brought in a man that had made models of a machine, out of plastic, very interesting, but the students couldn't equip themselves with all of that. However, this coming year with John White returning on the staff, model making may be happily restored.

Mitchell: It seems to me that it's a tremendous discipline to see the thing in the setting with the scale, get the scale right and proportion.

Schaeffer: Yes indeed. How can you feel what a form looks like in space by making a picture of it? You have to have the actual three-dimension thing related in scale to space.

Now, this was when Mrs. Moholy-Nagy came in.

Mitchell: Oh, photograms.

Schaeffer: And Martin Metal came with her. (Mr. Moholy-Nagy had passed on.) She came with him from Chicago and he operated the big workshop in the basement with power tools, and a photographer's department, and she did the lecturing. When she came to San Francisco to teach, she looked around at the different art schools. She chose my school as the one that she wanted to teach in. I didn't choose her, she chose us. She gave lectures on art education and



## THE SCHOOL

The homes we live in and the things we use in daily life must be developed to meet the aesthetic as well as functional needs of our contemporary living. Under the direction of Rudolph Schaeffer, the teaching of the Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design continually seeks to coordinate the principles of aesthetics with the techniques of creative activity. The function of this instruction is to stimulate, to guide and to inform. It imparts an outlook and a philosophy to design that brings to the student confidence and a progressive development and application of his abilities.

Since the school was established in San Francisco in 1926, it has made a contribution to the maturing of the modern movement in the decorative arts of the West. It has brought into relationship the most stimulative concepts of the modern European schools and the recent growing awareness of the abundant culture of the Orient.

The concern of the school has been from the beginning, first and most importantly, to give the student a sound and broad knowledge of the principles of design and color; the possession of an informed outlook on beauty and its relation to living. Through this basic training, graduates of the school are successfully practicing in New York, London, Paris and of course San Francisco and the West, in many fields such as interior and architectural design, furniture and product design, window display and exhibition, textile design, flower arrangement, ceramics, weaving, stage design, color and design consultation for industry and education.

In this coming season the school will have a two-fold program returning it to its pre-war status of both full time day and part-time evening school. Integrated professional training in all fields of design will be offered in a four year course as well as the one year specialized course in Interior Design and Color which has been given for the past several years. Joining the faculty will be Sibyl Maholy-Nagy, late of the Institute of Design in Chicago, Martin Metal of the City College of San Francisco and Don Smith, San Francisco designer.

Finally, the aim of the school is to stimulate, through many approaches, the creative talent of the student for the designing of beautiful things of use. The student is led to view with independent confidence his opportunities in the field of design for all purposes. The Rudolph Schaeffer School works towards freeing him as a being, informing and developing him as a creator, and associating him efficiently with modern needs and trends in design.



## THE GALLERY

East-West Arts Gallery was founded by Rudolph Schaeffer and is located in the School to facilitate more fully the long established teaching policy of integrating the arts of the East and the West. This gallery is devoted to the showing of ancient Oriental arts alternating with Western contemporary arts. East-West Arts Gallery through a colorful manner of presentation and an analysis of the exhibits will afford the student an opportunity of seeing and studying Oriental art in relationship to Western contemporary design. The gallery is open to visitors Monday through Friday from 1 until 5, admission free. The student is privileged to enter at any time.



# PROFESSIONAL DESIGN

This course presents an integrated visual, aesthetic and intellectual training program in all professional fields of design and color, giving in a projected four years, credit towards a bachelor's degree. Generally, the first year is concerned with theory, the second year with the application of these theories in exercises, the third year with the solution of practical problems and the fourth year with apprentice work related to advanced class problems. In the school term 1950-51, the first and third years of training will be offered. In the school term 1951-52, the second and fourth years of training will be offered.

## FIRST YEAR 30 HOURS

The first year's work is concerned with a development of the basic understanding of principles of color, the relation of forms in both two and three dimensions, and the introduction to working in various mediums.

## FALL TERM I

**11-a Color Study** Color awareness . . . scientific prismatic color theory . . . history and techniques of color research . . . fundamental principles of color relationships; value and intensity charts . . . complementaries . . . techniques of color mixing.

4 hours M 1:30-3:30 p.m. and W 10-12 a.m.

Room B

SCHAEFFER

**12-a Design** Awareness of form, line and texture . . . fundamental creative principles of three-dimensional design . . . philosophy of aesthetics . . . relationship of form, space and function . . . The Line: geometric, angular, free-form, outline, line division, colored line, linear optical illusion.

4 hours T Th 10-12 a.m. Rooms A and B

SCHAEFFER

Basic Photography Laboratory; light and the photograph. (Permission of instructor.)

2 hours W 6:30-8:30 p.m. Room D

BARBERA

**13-a Design Workshop** Basic wood working . . . hand-tooled surfaces . . . hand-shaped form; hand sculpture . . . hand-finished form; sanding, varnishing, painting, texturing . . . hand-cut wood . . . machine-cut wood . . . plasticity, durability, strength.

8 hours W-F 1:30-5:30 Room D

METAL

**4-a Drawing** Interior sketching and rendering.

3 hours F 9-12 a.m. Room B

CAMPBELL

**5-a Textile Design** The creation of surface design in repeating dark-light patterns for printed fabrics and wallpaper . . . designs are first created in basic values . . . then translated into a variety of color schemes . . . color is an essential requirement studied previously or concurrently with Textile Design.

3 hours M 9-12 a.m. Room C

SMITH

**6-a Oriental Art** Arts and Crafts; materials and techniques of the Far East presented especially to furnish the student with a backlog of inspirational ideas and data . . . lore, mythology, symbolic designs . . . pottery, stoneware, porcelain . . . nascent pottery forms . . . color.

(This course is amply illustrated with authentic examples of Oriental art from both the Rudolph Schaeffer and Chingwah Lee collections. A large section of the school library is devoted to rare publications on Oriental art.)

2 hours M 5:30-7:30 p.m. Room A

LEE

**17-a Art History and the Humanities** Contemporary art forms . . . iconographic art; naturalism, magic realism, surrealism . . . abstract art; constructivism and structural emphasis, expressionism and color symbolism.

4 hours T-Th 1:30-3:30 Room A

## WINTER TERM II

(Schedule of classes is the same as Fall Term I.)

**11-b Color Study** Professional projects . . . color coordination . . . texture coordination . . . color relation to architectural form, interior and exterior . . . color psychology . . . color juxtaposition in wet and dry mediums . . . color application to different surfaces; smooth, rough, corrugated, etc.

4 hours

SCHAEFFER

**12-b Design** Aesthetic appreciation of form, line, color and texture in contemporary design . . . aesthetics in mass production . . . aesthetic parallels within oriental and contemporary design . . . modern designers and their work . . . fine arts and the new interior . . . the plane; plane definition through black-white gradation, definition through pigment, definition through textures . . . inclined plane . . . receding and advancing plane . . . planar interpenetration . . . illusionistic planes . . . surface enrichment. (Lectures are illustrated with slides and examples from the school collection of reference materials.)

4 hours

SCHAEFFER

Basic Photography Laboratory; light modulators and manipulation; processes of exposure, developing, printing and enlarging. (Permission of instructor.)

2 hours

BARBERA

**13-b Design Workshop** Basic wood joining; gluing, laminating, grooving, joining; pegs, nails, screws, hinges; knowledge of different wood types, combining of different wood types.

8 hours

METAL

**4-b Drawing** A further study of interior rendering.

3 hours

CAMPBELL

**5-b Textile Design** The exploration of design motif in natural objects, documentary subject matter and translated textural effects . . . study of single design motifs in varying scale and the possibilities of different uses . . . scale in relation to drapery and apparel fabrics, wallpaper and decorative papers.

3 hours

SMITH

**6-b Oriental Art** Arts and Crafts; materials and techniques of the Far East . . . origin of painting . . . development of Chinese canons of art . . . influence of Chan (Zen) philosophy on Sung ink monochromes . . . brush technique . . . seals . . . calligraphy . . . fresco, textiles, lacquer, painting.

2 hours

LEE

**17-b Art History and the Humanities** Primitive art forms; the art of tradition and continuity . . . motion and space . . . nature identification . . . signs and symbols of communication . . . structure and ornamentation.

4 hours

## SPRING TERM III

(Schedule of classes is the same as Fall Term I.)

**11-c**  
**Color Study**  
**(Dyeing)** Color and light relationships . . . color translucency and transparency in dyes . . . color control in cotton, silk, wool and synthetic textiles through the technique of dyeing . . . further work in precision pigment mixing and hue matching in dyes.  
4 hours

VESTAL

**12-c**  
**Design** Line-plane composition in space, the two dimensional planar space . . . symmetric and asymmetric space organization . . . line and plane in depth and as ornamentation.  
4 hours

SCHAEFFER

Basic Photography Laboratory; the object as light and shadow modulator . . . photographic scale, composition, texture. (Permission of instructor.)  
2 hours

BARBERA

**13-c**  
**Design**  
**Workshop** Advanced wood working; drilling, turning, bending, concave-convex wood forms, wood veneer.  
8 hours

METAL

**4-c**  
**Drawing** Furniture design and blue-print detailing . . . rendering in various media.  
3 hours

CAMPBELL

**5-c**  
**Textile Design** Designs created for specific interior projects correlating furniture, fabrics, color . . . designs for professional presentation in accord with production methods.  
3 hours

SMITH

**6-c**  
**Oriental Art** Arts and Crafts; materials and techniques of the Far East . . . study and modern application of enamels and cloisonne . . . pewter and bronzes . . . wood and lattice . . . stone, jade and ivory carvings.  
2 hours

LEE

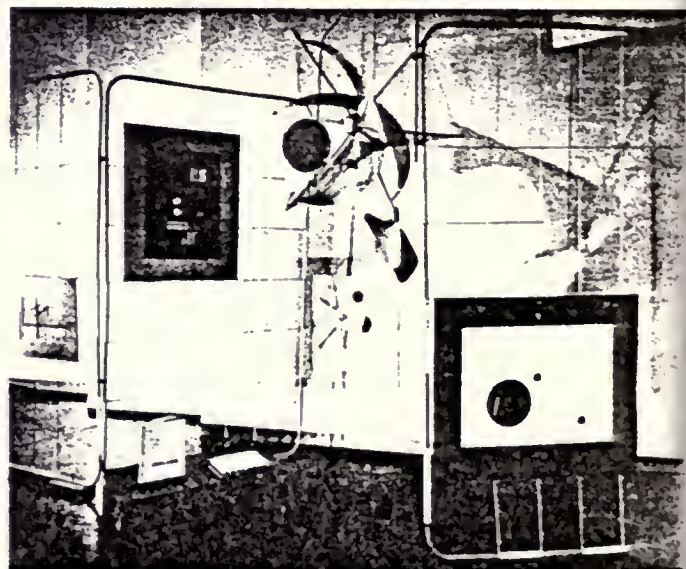
**17-c**  
**Art History**  
**and the**  
**Humanities** Pre-historic art; the Franco-cantabrian heritage.  
4 hours



The Professional Design School requires between 27 and 30 hours a week for the first and third years for a full program. For the complete course of 32 weeks, tuition and supplies are \$550.00 when paid in advance or \$210.00 per term when paid in advance, or by the subject when not paid in advance.

Any subject can be taken separately; below are tuition and supply rates on separate subjects by the term.

Color 11 or 31 . . . . .	\$60.00
Design 12 or 32 . . . . .	85.00
Design Workshop 13 or 33 . . . . .	85.00
Drawing 4 or 34 . . . . .	45.00
Textile Design 5 . . . . .	60.00
Oriental Art 6 or 36 . . . . .	35.00
Art History and the Humanities 17 or 37 . . . . .	50.00





# FACULTY

## DIRECTOR

**RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER** . . . Educator, colorist and versatile designer. Graduate in 1907 of the Thomas Normal Training School, Detroit; early pupil of Ernest Batchelder, Ralph Johannot, Douglas Donaldson. Studied mainly abroad in Paris, Munich, Vienna and the Orient. For the U. S. Department of Education did industrial art research in trade schools of Munich, Germany. Formerly Art Director, Greek Theater, Berkeley, California, and Children's theater, in San Francisco. Over 25 years of lecturing and professional practice in modern interior design and color, three-dimensional design and pioneer in creative teaching techniques and flower arrangement.

Author of *Flower Arrangement Folia* (1935) and numerous magazine articles on flower arrangement.

Taught 7 years color-design and handicrafts at California School of Fine Arts; taught summer sessions University of California 1915, Stanford 1917 and Cornish School, Seattle, 1922.

## INSTRUCTORS

**CHINGWAH LEE** . . . Recognized authority in Chinese Art. B.A., University of California, 1926; advanced post-graduate work in art and anthropology. Articles for *California Arts and Architecture*, *Chinese Digest* and other publications. Many of his papers on Asiatic culture used by leading universities. Principal Hip Wao Summer School, San Francisco, 1927-1930. Appraiser for importers and insurance companies. Technical consultant to Hollywood, feature player in "The Good Earth," "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo," and "Little Mister Jim." At present manager of Chinatown section Grayline Tours, owner of a studio Chinese Art Museum, and lecturer at Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design since 1947 in Chinese Art.

**CLARA VESTAL** . . . Studied art at Simmons College, Boston; B.A., University of Montana; assistant in art department for one year after graduation. Post-graduate courses at California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco. Special courses with the Peter Fahey Studios, San Francisco. Eight years of study and teaching with Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design in paper crafts, blockprinting, weaving, dyeing, flower arrangement. Director Arts and Skills Workshop of American Red Cross, San Francisco, 1946-1947. Instructor at Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design since 1927 in crafts.

**JOHN CARDEN CAMPBELL** . . . Graduate Sacramento Jr. College 1936. Attended former Art Students League of San Francisco 1936-1937. Graduate 1938 Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design. In the special services of U. S. Army had charge of designing recreation rooms and theaters. At present, designer of architectural firm of Campbell and Wang, San Francisco. Work has recently appeared in *Architectural Forum*, *Arts and Architecture*, *Interiors*, and *South American* magazines. Exhibited in several recent museum shows of architectural designs in the Bay area at San Francisco Museum of Art and the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum. One man show of the firm of Campbell and Wang at the East-West Arts Gallery in the Rudolph Schaeffer School. Instructor of Interior Drawing and rendering at Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design since 1947.

**CURTISS COWAN** . . . Designer for theater. B.A., Reed College in Drama and Literature 1948; technical director and designer for college theater; art training Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design and Black Mountain College; graduate work with Arch Lauterer, Mills College. Window and store display with Gumps, San Francisco. Production coordinator for Martha Graham, New York. Assistant and secretary to Rudolph Schaeffer. One of the directors and designers with the Interplay's Theater, San Francisco.

## GUEST INSTRUCTORS

**SIBYL MOHOLY-NAGY** . . . Lecturer, art critic. Graduate of the Municipal Lyceum, Dresden-Neustadt; Academy for the Publishers and Bookdealers Trade, Leipzig; School of Dramatic Arts, Schauspielhaus, Dresden. In charge of stage appointments in Breslau, Frankfurt, Berlin. Also head of the Dramatics Depts. for theaters in Frankfurt, Berlin and Darmstadt, Hesse. Director of the summer school, Humanities and Lecture Division and the Library at the Institute of Design in Chicago, 1939-1948. Associate professor of art at Bradley University in 1948. Lecturer at the University of Chicago 1948, University of California 1949 and Extension Division 1950.

Has published, in collaboration with Laszlo Moholy-Nagy *The New Vision* and *Vision in Motion*. Author of *The Imperfect Woman*, London 1936; *Klee, Pedagogical Sketchbook 1944* (Translation); *Children's Children*, N. Y., 1945; *Moholy-Nagy, Experiment in Totality*, N. Y. 1950; in preparation, *Ancestors of Modern Art, A Study in Visual Analogies*, 1951.

**MARTIN METAL** . . . Lecturer, designer. B.A. and M.A., University of Chicago; graduate work Chicago Art Institute, Ohio State University, Stanford University, University of California. Instructor in design and art history, Institute of Design, Chicago; Detroit Institute of Technology; City College of San Francisco; University of California. Administrator of arts and crafts for Federal Public Housing Authority, Willow Run, Michigan. Designer of exhibits for San Francisco Museum. Display units reviewed by *Interiors* magazine. Numerous exhibits of paintings, ceramics, sculpture, photographs and films at galleries in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Detroit, Colorado Springs. Author of articles on design and art education for the National Education Association; monographs and catalogues for San Francisco Museum of Art.

**DON SMITH** . . . Designer of applied arts; studied Chouinard Institute, Los Angeles; Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design, San Francisco. Display designer for Gumps, San Francisco. Now free-lance designer of wallpaper and textiles, interiors, advertising layout, color coordination and commercial display. Work shown at San Francisco Museum of Art, M. H. deYoung Memorial Museum, Centennial Gallery, Berkeley, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Detroit Institute of Arts, Museum of Modern Art exhibition "Modern Art in Your Life" 1949, New York. Designer for James Kemble Mills collection of wallpapers; "Campagna" collection of decorative fabrics. Work published in *Window Display* by Robert Leydenfrost and *Interior* magazine. Two first awards in the 1948 First Annual Exhibition of Advertising Art, San Francisco Museum of Art. First award for wallpaper design 1948 Annual International Design competition sponsored by the A.I.D. Currently instructor at the Art League of California, California School of Fine Arts and the Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design.

**RAYMOND F. BARBERA** . . . Teacher and photographer. Studied San Francisco City College, San Jose State College, California College of Arts and Crafts. Associate in Arts, San Francisco City College. Articles in *Popular Photography* and *The Camera*.

## GALLERY

**RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER** . . . Director.

**ALICE PUTNAM BREUER** . . . Associate Director. Curator, instructor, author. B.A., M.A. Mills College. Curator Art Gallery, Mills College 1935-42. Instructor in history of Oriental Art and Art of the Americas and in history and technique of Hand Loom Weaving, Mills College 1936-46. Docent in Oriental arts, San Francisco Museum of Art, M. H. deYoung Memorial Museum, Pacific Culture Division of the Palace of Fine Art, Golden Gate International Exposition. Editor of divers papers on the arts of the Americas and China. Author of articles on museum techniques and Chinese arts for the *Amer. Ass. of Mus.*, and *Amer. Council of Learned Soc.* Published *Guatemalan Textiles*, Prentiss N. Gray Collection, Mills College, 1942. Participated in arranging early jade in the International Exhibition of Chinese Art, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1935.

**CHINGWAH LEE** . . . research Oriental Art.

Schaeffer: history of art. But she only stayed a year and went back to Pratt Institute and was the head of the architectural department at Pratt. She said she left San Francisco because San Francisco was absolutely a cultural desert [laughter], the only oasis in it was the Schaeffer school!

Mitchell: When was that?

Schaeffer: I think it would be in here, on this letter, 1949-1950. And then this other is not a dated letter. That's a shame.

Mitchell: One doesn't know what's going to be important.

Schaeffer: I had a habit of getting out announcements and putting only the day of the month on, but never the year. I've improved in that, thank goodness.

#### Book on Flower Arranging

Mitchell: Let's round off on a little bit about the flower arranging, because this book, Flower Arranging, was put out in 1935?

Schaeffer: As far as I know, it was the first book on flower arrangement that was published in America. There were plenty of books on Japanese flower arrangement, but not on contemporary design and color in flower arrangement.

Mitchell: So what you were really showing in this book was how to achieve a certain kind of aesthetic experience through an activity of daily life?

Schaeffer: Yes, flowers and plant material just became another medium for design and color. It's as simple as that. Just the same as we use paper and cardboard and paints for design and color, we used flowers and plant material, but we didn't make them quite as abstract, you see? Still, some of the students made abstract flower arrangements, but I didn't. I felt it was a little bit of an insult to the flower to twist the stems and bend things around to make a design that originally was made in inert materials.

You had to recognize the fact that the flowers are living entities, and when you brought them in from the garden, or from the flower market, they entered a new life, a new existence. Out in nature they were growing in the garden, they're natural, realistic, but when you bring them in and put them in a container,



- Schaeffer: and in the right setting relating flower to flower, and flowers to the container, and the whole thing related to the space it is to be in, whether it's on the dining room table or on the chest or wherever, then they have a new existence. They're existing as an art form, just the same as a dancer spending his day in the office and having regular functioning of everyday life, then he gets on a stage and he becomes an art form. From realism to an art form is sort of an abstraction too. It can be very abstract, like Martha Graham expressed in her dance.
- Mitchell: There's also the fact that you brought the East and the West together in your kind of adaptation of the Japanese art.
- Schaeffer: That was always the idea, and then of course when Dr. Chaudhuri arrived on the scene, he intensified all that interest.
- Mitchell: When you teach, you still do flower arranging, don't you?
- Schaeffer: I haven't been doing the flower arrangement teaching this last year.
- Mitchell: I'd like to arrange something like that for the camera.
- Schaeffer: I did something this morning.
- Mitchell: I mean when you do it for people.
- Schaeffer: Well, I could make a demonstration of flower arranging.
- Mitchell: That would be fun. Then when you bring flowers into your composition, it's stronger.
- Schaeffer: That would be fun, that I do like I breathe. One of the students came in just as I got finished this morning, and he's been in the flower arrangement class. I had to brag a little bit: I said, "See, you fellows, when you're in class you take all day to do a flower arrangement. I did this in the last thirty minutes." [laughter]
- Mitchell: What did he say?
- Schaeffer: He said, "Well, you're the master."

Right after I published my book, I was in several magazines, House Beautiful, in Better Homes and Gardens. I had articles in that, my pictures were in it and this one, Homes of the West, didn't last very long but it published a series of three numbers that had my flower arrangements in it.

- Mitchell: You're doing here a flower arrangement, "A Photographic Lesson in Holiday Decoration." And here's another centerpiece, "Decoration with Fruit." Here's another one. You're "A Prophet of Style Trends," it says here. Here you're using plasticene.
- Schaeffer: Another thing I introduced into flower arrangement was plasticene. I discovered it. Now it comes under the name of Posey clay, and manufacturers make big fortunes out of it.
- Mitchell: It's used for what?
- Schaeffer: You put it on the bottom of the dry needle holder and it adheres. It's impervious to water, you see.

While we're talking about flower arrangement, I can tell you an experience I had. I happened to be forced to find it. I was doing a big decoration for a young lady for the announcement of her wedding. I was making a flower arrangement on the mantel in the living room. I'd made one for the dining room table and then I was making one for over the mantel.

It was approaching midnight. I was adding the last gladiola, when the whole arrangement became too top heavy and the whole thing fell forward into my face. After that catastrophe I used plasticene or modeling clay to anchor securely the needle flower holders.

INTERVIEW 6: April 16, 1981

Parties at St. Anne Street

Mitchell: You had quite a few parties at the school. I am referring to your sense of fun among your students in the school, and the parties. It seems to me that's part of your method of teaching.

Schaeffer: Exactly. I mix up what I think sometimes is quite profound, and in the next instance we're laughing about something. That levity goes all through my teaching.

Mitchell: I particularly liked the photograph of you in the no-tan outfit, with the black shoe and the white shoe, and the black sock and the white sock, and the white pants and the black jacket.

Schaeffer: Oh, we always had lots of fun and wonderful parties. Oh! [chuckles] My secretary, Miss. Griswold--we called her Grizzie--she was a kind of a cutup. And we had a party one evening, and during the party one of the boys went down to the foot of the stairs--it was all rehearsed ahead of time, you see, but nobody else knew about it--and he discovered this drunk down at the curb, below. And he came up and told us about it, "There's a drunk down there." So, he went down again, and the first thing we knew he was bringing the drunk up the stairs, in the room where the party was going on. And we were all horrified, you know, and I was ready to go back into the office and call the police. And just as I was about to ring the police, then the whole thing exploded. It was the secretary, Grizzie, made up! [chuckles] Honestly, I haven't thought about that all these years. It just comes to me now. What fun! Everybody just howled. They just couldn't get over it. And she then took off her mask and joined the party.

Driftwood and Rocks and Sogo Matsumoto

Mitchell: Let's go on with the driftwood. [see discussion of Anne Brigman earlier] I combined these driftwoods and rocks with dry material, with the dry things that you get in the autumn, and we had the first exhibition of anywhere that I know in this country of that sort of thing. We called the exhibition "Arrangements from Field and Forest." And I have some pictures of that. They're very provocative now, of what's going on today with found material. Norman Edwards did an arrangement that was very reminiscent of what I saw in Honolulu just a few weeks ago. (It was a movement of using found material in an aesthetic manner.) Nothing in that exhibition was quite like Norman Edwards's composition.

He was spending this summer up on the Eel River, on the south fork, near Weott. And he was inspired by all of these out-of-door things. And so he gathered different materials up there and what he did was, he made a Madonna. He'd been to Spain, and all along the highways, through the fields, they had the Madonna of the Fields. And so, he found a little oval pebble for the head of the Madonna, and a little round one, in proportion, for the Christ Child. And he painted a tiny little brush stroke for the eyelid and eyes, and nose, and mouth. Just a suggestion. Very contemporary looking. Just an impression.

Then he fitted on the Madonna a crown made of some rusty tin, or something he picked up in the riverbed. It made a beautiful crown. It looked like some wonderful metal, some antique metal. and for the dress there was a piece of some gauze fabric that he picked up on the river shore, wetted, you see, and he smoothed it out, and made a gown. And do you know those everlasting flowers, those little tiny white flowers? They made a little pattern on that gauze. It was the most charming thing I ever saw.

And this Madonna held the little Christ Child, you see, and that was in our show. Just a few weeks ago I saw a show at the academy in Honolulu that was along that line, but nothing in the show was as charming as that Madonna and the Christ Child of Norman Edwards. Well anyway, that was the inspiration from dear Anne Brigman.

And now, I had a visitor. This was just before my fiftieth birthday, in 1936. A man from Japan, Sogo Matsumoto, came to visit the school. He was selling Chinese prints. I don't know how he happened to hear of me or the school, but he came anyway, and he saw what we were doing with driftwood and rocks and he said, "Mr. Schaeffer, you should come with me to China and Japan,



Schaeffer: and see the rocks and things that they use over there in the gardens." Of course, I'd never been to the Orient, but I had seen Chinese landscape painting.

He was gathering up a little group of people and the reason he came to the school was he thought maybe he'd get some of my pupils to go on his tour. He came to the school, and then he invited me to go along on the tour. He said he had an extra ticket on this tour. He could take an escort. Evidently his wife was in Japan, so she wasn't available. I could come, provided I would give some talks to the group on the boat on what they were supposed to see, what they were expected to see. I'd been teaching free brush and color and all, but I'd never been to the Orient. Little did I know what we were to see!

#### Color Block Prints in China

Schaeffer: Well, during that trip, in Peking, he took us to a connoisseur, a collector of Chinese art. I purchased my first set of Chinese prints from this gentleman. He told us how these prints came about, that you see up there. They are some of the early prints from the first blocks, of about 1644, not from the first edition, but from the original blocks. The blocks, of course, over a period of a hundred years or more wore out, and they had to cut new ones; they weren't like the old ones.

Anyway, around the end of the Ming dynasty, there was this seal cutter by the name of Hu Chin Min. He was famous throughout China for cutting seals. They had to be very expert. They cut them oftentimes in jade. He was a man with a kind heart. And he got this idea that he wanted to do some color printing to benefit young students of painting.

Prior to 1644, all the printing that was done, block printing, was done in black and white, a key block. Then if they wanted color, they had to touch it in by the brush. That was the way in Europe, too. That was before the Japanese color prints were made. They had to fill the color in by the brush.

He was so skillful, he wanted to do something new. He wanted to print color directly, color against and over color, instead of putting it in with a brush. He wanted his prints to be like paintings.

So all the famous painters of the day, the famous painter of fruits and flowers, the famous painter of rocks, the painter of the wild orchid--there were thirty-three different artists

Schaeffer: and each had a special subject--he invited them all to his studio, the Ten Bamboo Hall. And I suppose they had a lot of Chinese wine to drink, too. All the artists and poets used to imbibe lots of wine. So he said, "Now, fellows, you are great artists, you have the privilege of getting into the palaces and into the wealthy homes where you can see the great paintings of the masters of the Tang dynasty, and the early paintings. You have that privilege. What about the young art student of the academy?" (See, they had academies in those days, art academies in the Ming dynasty.) "What about them? They can't see these things. They can only see what you're doing."

So he said, "Now what I want you to do, Mr. Rock Painter and Mr. Fruit Painter, I want you to make uniform-sized paintings, and I will reproduce them exactly like you have painted them."

You see, because he was an expert carver, he could carve the minutest brushstroke. He said, "I'll print them, so that an art student for a few pennies can have a set of these prints to take with them whenever they go to the mountains or wherever they go to paint." It was the first democratic venture in China in the field of art education.

There have been lots of books written on this. Oh, these were very popular. If you'll notice, there's a crease down the middle of each one. They were folded, like that. And in between there was a little poem.

Mitchell: It was like a book, really.

Schaeffer: They were little paperbound books. I have some of the later editions, which imitate them, which I showed the other day.

They were so successful and so popular that two artists in the next century, in the early 1700s, the Wang brothers, decided to do a complete manual on the art of painting. Oh, and they included mountains, trees, and landscapes and all that. And there's recently a Chinese-American lady who published a whole treatise on that series. The Wang brothers called their series the Mustard Seed Garden Studio, because they had a little garden, and their studio or hall was in a tiny garden, like the grain of a mustard seed. A little mountain, a little stream, and you see, that's why I have out here in my garden a little hill, to simulate a mountain, you see up there.

Mitchell: And you also have a little bridge with a little stream.

Schaeffer: All that is inspired by the Chinese. [laughs]

So, this is the story that this man told. And I bought from him a very inferior set of later printing. I didn't have very much money with me. Oh, my gracious. I didn't have much money at home, or with me, or anywhere. Because I had gotten my trip free, I bought a very inferior set, but then Matsumoto would come year after year, after that. He had combed China and Japan for these prints, bought everything he could find, first printings and later ones, all, and brought them to this country.

But he was very clever with me. He'd bring some of the very top prints with some of later editions. He would only sell them to me in a group. He was a very clever businessman. He knew I didn't have very much money and at that time couldn't distinguish an early print from a late one. You see? And my secretary at that time, when I'd write him a check, there'd be a whole week she wouldn't speak to me. Because she was responsible for paying the rent. [chuckles] But I had to get these prints. I was impressed with them.

Matsumoto was the one who furnished the Metropolitan, Seattle, all the western community. The Metropolitan didn't have prints before that. Only the Boston Museum had a collection. And so he sold prints to many museums throughout the country, at the same time he sold some to me.

Mitchell: So over the years he was coming to you with these things?

Schaeffer: Later, a few years later, not many years later, because he died very shortly after that.

Mitchell: Oh. Are we in the forties now, or are we still in the thirties?

Schaeffer: We're still in the thirties.

Mitchell: Because China was still open.

Schaeffer: Yes. China was still open. And I was very fortunate. I went to China and Japan.

The Process of Understanding Prismatic Color Theory Reviewed  
by Rudolph Schaeffer

Mitchell: Did that trip to China affect your teaching and your ideas in certain specific ways? Did you come back with certain ideas for your teaching that were different from what you set out?

Schaeffer: No. There was always this enrichment happening. It did stimulate my interest in Oriental art. In fact, much of it I always got intuitively ahead of time, much of it, as I look back now.

Where did I get the idea of the left side and the right side of the brain? I was teaching intuition balancing with reasoning from the very beginning. But I didn't know intuition came from the right side and the reasoning came from the left side. I didn't know anything about the psychology of consciousness. But I was teaching it, nevertheless. Now I don't say this boastfully, I say it because I feel now I was fortunate enough to be a channel for this flowing through me. And I still am that channel today. I open myself as a channel for intuition. There's no end to the development of it. Just like two years ago, the whole prismatic theory and its application jelled into its completeness. And I'd been teaching it for fifty years!

Mitchell: Can you describe what happened in your head?

Schaeffer: I just had to go and immediately make an outline, quick, while it was fresh in my mind. That's why I have to get this in publication. I have to get it down for future students and teachers. I have the outline, which a year ago I taught from I gave the system to the second and third year people. Then we divided up in small groups among the different teachers for a workshop. They had to carry it out.

First they had to make their color rhythm, the sequence in lineal--left side of the brain, lineal, see? Step by step. Hue, sequence, in the prismatic color wheel. How far you go, you see? Step by step. Value, step by step. Intensity, step by step. Quantity, step by step. Always diminishing. Dominant, with a diminishing gradation. And, all of that jelled as a unit, one time.

I discovered in making the outline something I had incorrect, that I had gotten wrong years ago. And I know why I got it wrong, too. Because I misinterpreted a word in Oswald's book on color



Schaeffer: that he'd written way long in the 19th century, one of the books on color. He spoke of isovalence, and I thought it meant the same intensity. But it meant the same value. You see? Value is light and dark, attributes of color. Intensity is the chroma, see? So I invented a new word, isochromatic, for hues of the same intensity or chroma.

I decided on rereading that book I found that he referred to this as the same value: isovalence. When two colors are the same degree of lightness or darkness, you see, they're isovalent. But if they are the same degree in intensity, they're isochromatic. So I invented a new word: isochromatic.

After all these years, you know? How dumb I was not to listen to that intuitive information. One doesn't always listen. But I only discovered it by going back to the original text.

Mitchell: By going back to the original text you saw it anew again, with all your experience.

Schaeffer: With all my experience. Then I knew what he was driving at. Because he put the same amount of white with each color, you see? The same amount of whiteness or lightness to make the values equal--isovalence.

Now where were we?

Mitchell: We're talking really now about your teaching and the school and some of the teaching techniques you had that came out of the East-West connection. Because you were talking about this Oriental manual. But chronologically, we're on the trip to China.

Schaeffer: Well, those prints have had a great influence on my flower arrangements and on composition in general.

Mitchell: Now, let's get you back from China. Shall we?

#### More on the China Trip

Schaeffer: Well, that was the most important thing in China. In Japan we had a lesson in flower arrangement, and we had a lesson in Sumi painting. We were a week in Tokyo. We landed in Yokohama, and we went around and saw all the--I can't remember those names, now.

Mitchell: Now this was a trip of how long?

Schaeffer: Eight weeks. It took two weeks to go on the boat. We stopped at Honolulu, and then we landed in Yokohama. From here to Yokohama, stopping at Honolulu. Then we had four weeks in Japan and China.

Mitchell: You had plenty of time to give those lectures on the boat.

Schaeffer: Oh, yes. For color, I borrowed people's hats, men's neckties and everything in color I could put together to make color schemes. And then I gave a demonstration of freebrush Sumi painting up on the deck. It was lovely weather, and our little group was just about eight or nine people. Ten at the most, with me and Matsumoto. But they put up chairs for a dozen more. Everybody, instead of playing shuffleboard, they listened to me.

Mitchell: Rudolph, what year was that?

Schaeffer: That was 1936. I published my folio, my book on flower arrangement, in 1935. And I took some along.

And you remember the plate with the bubble bowl and the nasturtiums? Well, the Tokyo newspaper published that as an example of "Western" flower arrangement. So I'm awfully glad I went that time. That must have been in my destiny. Because after that there was no more chance to get into China. That was the last minute before the Chinese-Japanese War.

#### Treasure Island/Shadowgram

Schaeffer: I came back from China. And then there was the big Exposition at Treasure Island. And that's where I did that Shadowgram that Anne described.

Mitchell: Tell me more about it.

Schaeffer: Well, do you suppose you can visualize it? Are you good at visualization? Well, anyway, that was the year Moholy-Nagy was here at Mills. And he saw my Shadowgram and told me afterwards it was one of the most interesting in the whole building. I was with another teacher; Doris MacMillan and I together gave him a reception one afternoon in her penthouse on Taylor Street. We jointly were host and hostess for Moholy.

Schaeffer: Well, I'll tell you. It was a contraption about three feet in length and it could be contained in a cylinder eleven or twelve inches in diameter. It should fit into a cylinder about three feet long and about a foot in diameter. Well, I had a hole cut in the ceiling about three and a half feet, and then the same size disk, wooden disk, about an inch thick, on the floor, that just matched that. It looked as though what was cut out up there was just dropped down onto the floor. Then I connected the circumferences of each with clothesline, heavy cord, at intervals about eight inches, see? You can imagine, that created a cylinder the sides of which were cords, and the top was negative, and the bottom was positive.

Then, I hung this kind of a mobile, in the center of that cylinder. Can you imagine? It was made of geometric planes of colored plastic, translucent, and I think maybe there were some opaque planes as well in it, too, of balsawood, but painted. Then I put a spotlight high up above the center in the opening way up above, high, out of sight. That shone down onto the mobile, and cast a shadow in color on the floor of the rope cylinder, with blue, magenta, and turquoise--blue green, you know--and different prismatically related colors, and it looked kind of, almost like a gorgeous big butterfly. But it suggested a butterfly. And I labeled the whole thing Shadowgram.

There was always a slight breeze and it kept moving, gently moving. No wonder Moholy said it was the most interesting thing in the whole building. Fool that I was, I didn't have a color picture of it.

Mitchell: Well, now we have a verbal picture.

Schaeffer: I have it in my mind. I could duplicate it. Maybe if I had the picture it wouldn't be nearly as accurate as the real thing. You know, a photograph is just a symbol of the real thing. The difference between a photographic portrait and the work of a good portrait artist is a good portrait artist can catch the spirit, the character of a person--a good one. A photograph never does that completely, not with the same quality. No matter whether it's Imogen Cunningham or not who takes the picture.

Mitchell: It's difficult to do it in one photograph.

World War II and the St. Anne Street School

Schaeffer: In 1939 I came back, and I moved myself down to the school. Everybody had gone to war, so I moved myself.

Mitchell: You mean you didn't keep your house? Where were you living at the time, 1939?

Schaeffer: I left my apartment. I was living up on Macondray Lane, and had a wonderful view of the bay, north view, out towards Alcatraz. And I had some visitors from Michigan, and the highlight of their trip was sitting at my window and being able to see Alcatraz. [laughs] I tried to shut it out of my view.

Then the war came on. What I did was to move down to the school, and I had an evening class there. I had a 5 o'clock class, and I served tea and a little snack for them when they would come in, for everyone was working in the daytime or had gone to war.

At the St. Anne Street school, there were the original front doors on the first floor--big doors that opened up, for a truck to come in because it had been a commercial building. On the second floor and third floor there were these wonderful windows that you could open up from floor to ceiling. Downstairs the windows didn't open up, but the doors did. I had had a furnace installed in there, and then I'd completely turn off the furnace and I drove my car right in, so I didn't have to pay any garage rent. Drove right in onto the first floor of the school. [chuckles] You couldn't make a garage out of a classroom today.

Mitchell: Now, did you have a staff at this stage, during the war?

Mrs. Vestal and the Table Setting Show at the Fairmont

Schaeffer: No. Nobody.

That first year we had many blackouts. I had to have all the windows covered in my workshop downstairs with black paper. And I had this one class. You see, I wasn't drafted, but I was teaching and doing some work out at Letterman Hospital. That was one of the interesting episodes of my "career." More about that later.



Schaeffer: Our first craft teacher, Mrs. Vestal was still with me then. Mrs. Vestal and I together did a big table setting show at the Fairmont, sponsored by the Emporium department store. Thirty tables at the Fairmont Hotel, in the Gold Ballroom.

Mitchell: Thirty tables!

Schaeffer: Oh, that was something. There were quite a bit of pupils then. What year was that? I can't remember.

Anyway, there were thirty tables. And they were all to represent precious stones, semi-precious stones. The center one was the diamond table. The Emporium furnished all the dishes, and the candles, and everything, and glassware and silverware. Everything was furnished by the Emporium as a kind of an ad for the Emporium. Whether the Schaeffer School, whether Rudolph Schaeffer got any credit or not, I don't even remember. Only the president came in and saw it--of the Emporium--at 5:00 or 6:00 before it was really open, and everything was set. He told me afterwards it was the most beautiful thing he ever saw in his life.

We had the room in semi-darkness, just a little light up in the chandelier. All the tables were round and I had spot-lights that would cut off just at the edge of the table, didn't light anything else, just the table tops in this nice glow of light. Each table had candles and the candles were lighted, and it looked as though the candles made this glow. It was beautiful, just beautiful, one of the nicest things I've ever done.

Mrs. Vestal hasn't been teaching with us for fifteen years or more. She lives in Santa Cruz. More or less an invalid. I call her up about every six weeks or so, over the years. I always phone her. She was my right-hand craft teacher. She always did the craft work. She supervised making of things: papercraft, block printing, dyeing, aluminum construction, and all kinds of things. She was great at that.

Down the years, we made wonderful things out of tin. Schaeffer School did the first tin Christmas trees. Aluminum Christmas trees. New York produced aluminum trees the following year. Then it spread all over the country--aluminum Christmas trees. We had an exhibition of Christmas trees made out of every conceivable material that you can imagine. Corks and screws and wires and you couldn't imagine a kind of material that we didn't make a Christmas tree out of it. We had an exhibition of it then and sold them at our Christmas sale. Then the San

Schaeffer: Francisco Museum of Art followed; just a few years ago, they had Christmas tree exhibitions. But we started it. I don't think Dorr Bothwell has that in her lecture called "Rudy's firsts." Did I ever tell you about "Rudy's firsts?" [chuckles]

Mitchell: No. What's that?

Schaeffer: Well, can I digress for a minute?

Mitchell: Certainly.

Schaeffer: At "Old Swish" there was an iron bathtub, with claw feet, and it belonged to the year one, you know? The enamel had kind of worn off, when I took this house. It wasn't in very good condition. I got the idea of painting the thing, so I got some enamel paint. It was originally a white bathtub, conventional, like all bathtubs, all over the country, white. I painted it chartreuse, the color of my necktie. Exactly this color.

And so that's one of Rudy's firsts. A colored bathtub. Because that was before there were any colored bathtubs. All bathtubs were white. All tablecloths were white. The Schaeffer School was responsible for colored tablecloths. I don't think it was responsible for colored bathtubs, but it was after that... You see, I was on the crest of the wave.

I did a lot of research on dyeing, and Mrs. Vestal carried it out. In fact, she has a book all prepared, but never had it published, on dyeing. She carried it out to the nth degree. We started by dyeing tablecloths, and dyeing for weavings, and then the students did tablemats. And we dyed those. And we went to Chinatown and got natural bamboo mats and we dyed them different colors.

And then we'd have a table setting exhibition with Chinese colored dishes and we called it "Kaleidoscopic Tables." One table would be all in reds and another one would be in orange and another one would be in yellows and right around the color wheel. And also, we had colored candles. There were no colored candles at that time except red and green, and white, and cream, but we had a candle factory make us a whole spectrum, all the way around. Even magenta. Then a few years afterwards there were colored candles for sale.

In many ways, the school then was as innovative in color as the Bauhaus was in "form follows function." That was their credo. But I was emphasizing color. Not many people realize today what went on there in the thirties. The Bauhaus had world publicity; we had local San Francisco publicity. There's a whale of difference!

Raymond Duncan in Paris

Schaeffer: Anything out here on the coast would have recognition in New York and in Paris. Like Raymond Duncan said, "Rudolph, why don't you come to Paris with your school? The world passes through Paris. You'd be famous," he said. "Your school would be famous." But I preferred to continue on in the "cow pasture," which is what he called California.

Mitchell: Now, you knew him in Paris.

Schaeffer: Oh, yes. We became great friends.

Mitchell: When did you meet him?

Schaeffer: At the time of the Paris Exposition, 1925. When he'd come to San Francisco, this nice lady companion came with him. Every time he came to San Francisco he always came to visit me. Or if he had a reception at the Palace Hotel, he always invited me to come.

I spent a good deal of time with him in Paris. One time he wanted me to see a play he was giving out beyond Fountainbleau. It was a play he was giving in an old stone quarry, on a Sunday afternoon. And he called for me at my room, and he had a Model T Ford out in front. And we drove up the Champs Elysées in a Model T Ford, he with a band around his forehead--he always wore Greek clothes, you know, Greek robe, and a band around his gray hair, flowing out here. Here we drove up the Champs Elysées in that Model T Ford. And we finally got up to the place where it was the play was to be performed, out-of-doors. It was charming, against a background of rock quarry.

Mitchell: What dancers were these?

Schaeffer: It was a play that he had written. Oh, the dancer currently in Paris at that time was Loie Fuller. The one who danced with colored veils, discarding one after the other.

Mitchell: Did you see her dance?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, oh yes, of course! And then that's when I met Shankar, too, through Mark Tobey; he introduced me to Uday Shankar. And Tobey and I would go to his performances in Paris. Then later he had his own company, and travelled all over the country. When he came to San Francisco, I'd always go backstage to see him.

Letterman Hospital and Therapeutic Use of Color

Schaeffer: During the war, when we did that table setting at the Fairmont, Mrs. Vestal and I both joined the Arts and Skills Division of the Red Cross. (My goodness, when I stop and think of all the different things that I did, and was involved in, all relating to color and design, and not any unrelated thing did I ever get mixed up in, I think it's just amazing. Like I tell my students, "You're entering a life of creativity that has no end of variety. For heaven's sake, don't just spend all your time doing screen printing, get some knowledge of interior, too. Get some knowledge of all these different things, flower arrangement and all of that, as many different aspects of design and color as you can get.")

Mrs. Vestal and I joined the Arts and Skills Division of the Red Cross and Dorothy Liebes was the head of it. She was the director of this, in this area, you see? The scene of our activities in San Francisco was at the Letterman Hospital, and Mrs. Vestal and I went out there to look around to see where we're going to function.

These boys were coming back from the South Seas, shell-shocked. That's why they were in the psychiatric ward of the Letterman Hospital. And the Arts and Skills were something for them to do, you see? To rehabilitate themselves. And I don't remember now what she did, but I was going to do something in color, because I felt that color has a therapeutic value, and I proved it to be true during that experience. I'll tell you about it.

I had to think a lot about what kind of a medium I was going to use. I didn't want to use paint. Norman Edwards, whom I have told you about, who was so talented, had designed earlier, for the Denison Paper people, crepe paper in the whole series of prismatic color. So there was available all these beautiful colors. I thought, how can I do something with this colored paper?

Well, I had seen where carafes were done with raffia, with strings of raffia, and some were done with colored string. I got the idea of cutting across the bundles of colored crepe paper; you cut across about an inch and a quarter strips off the end, and keep right on cutting. Then you take one of those, which is continuous, you know, these one and a quarter inch strips they make yards of crepe paper ribbons. So you fasten one end up at the wall, securely on a hook. And then you fasten the



Schaeffer: other with a hand drill, and then you turn the crank, and you wind the paper ribbon up, twist, twist, twist, into a cord, a very strong cord.

Then you take this cord and you slather it with library paste. Not glue, but library paste. You rub that into that cord, and it doesn't change the color, though it might make the color run a bit. And then you start to coil it around, around a glass or bottle, or whatever you want to cover and decorate. And you can use different colors. You can have all orange, and yellow, and yellow-green, or you can have blue, and green. You can make color combinations. And then you let it dry, you see? And the paste, the library paste just disappears. But it holds it together. But you don't see that. It just soaks into the paper.

It was hard for the boys to choose colors or make combinations of color by themselves. They had been so accustomed to taking orders.

Anyway, they made all kinds of things, but mainly they would like to make ashtrays. And we had to have something very heavy, because we were afraid they might break it and cut themselves. Or they might smash it. They loved to make these things to send to their mothers, their girlfriends, you see.

So the point of the story is this! First of all, when I went down there, to that department, here were some of these fellows just lying down in the hall, and just kind of in a stupor. And you went in and you had to push back one of those doors like they have in garages, one of those black iron folding doors, you know. And on the windows there was grating, the walls were army buff color, a darker shade of brown on the wainscoating, and a cream buff above, and dismal looking, terribly depressing.

So I went to the lieutenant who was in charge, and I said, "Don't you think we could paint this up in some nice color?"

"Sure," he said. Fortunately he had some imagination. So we painted the iron grills and everything black beautiful turquoise blue. And the walls we painted chartreuse. I don't know what else. We must have brought in some magenta somewhere, I don't know.

Well then, Mrs. Vestal was teaching weaving in an adjoining room. In color, you see? We started out there twice a week. And the next week when we arrived, there was nobody lying on the floor, in the hall. The fellows were all in the room doing something. I had a long table where I put all this paper.

Schaeffer: After a couple of weeks, I noticed at the door of the ward there was a young soldier. Outside the door, in the hall. I remembered seeing him the first day I was there. And the second day I was there. This was the second week. He was always there at the door, looking in. And I always greeted him when I went in. "Hi," or something like that.

The nurse said that he never spoke. He'd been there two weeks and never uttered one word. But he was fascinated by what we were doing.

So finally, that next week, maybe after three weeks, I don't remember, I was sitting with my back to the door, talking to the students. The long table was full of these colored ribbons, all a riot of color, these colored papers, the strings that they had cut. That was a big job, they always had to cut the paper. And I was aware of somebody at my shoulder. And I looked up, and I said, "Hi!" Here was this silent fellow.

And he said, "It looks like a flower garden, doesn't it? You know, my mother had a beautiful flower garden." The first words that he had spoken since he came to the hospital.

I said, "Where did you come from? Where did you live?"

"Oh, I lived in Tennessee." I don't know. There was a little more conversation. But that was the thing. I carried on a conversation with him. It was the first conversation, first words he uttered--the nurse told me afterwards--the first words he uttered and he'd been there three weeks.

See, what happened was the color opened up a connection in his mind with his mother's garden. Something pleasant. Something pleasing, something he loved. The young man loved his mother's garden of flowers and his mother too. Music might do the same thing. But color is a vibration next to music. Next to sound. Light is next to sound, and light and color heal when accompanied with love.

Color was put into the world for beauty, not just for red stop light signals, green light signals. That's utilitarian, of course, that is expedient and useful, but it's here for beauty, which in a sense is love. It yearns for beauty and love. That's the trouble with our world today. It's all mixed up and out of kilter. So much is fragmented and contradictory.

Mitchell: What about other men who were working there, other cases?

Schaeffer: Well, nothing was quite as poignant as that. They were all pleased, but he was a special case, because the rest of the fellows chattered along, you know? But this man hadn't talked. I wish I had him tell me his name, and followed him up. Because soon later on he was discharged and went home, back to normal.

Mitchell: Well, you've never ventured into using color therapy any other time, have you Rudolph?

Schaeffer: The only thing is that I advocated color for hospitals. And one of my pupils supervised the color in Palo Alto Hospital years ago when it was built. He worked with the architect. And you know, hospital rooms traditionally were white. All the rooms were painted white.

In San Francisco hospitals, color is used abundantly now. Prisons could use color to advantage therapeutically. To bring color into the functions of daily life has always been a focus of my teaching. There was a time when I wish I could have done some work out at San Quentin. With color. I could have done a lot, if I had the time and energy. That would be a whole field of activity in itself, working in color to rehabilitate people.

Mitchell: Did you see changes in any of your own students?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, of course. Also the people who have trouble seeing color. Once in a while people have difficulty; not exactly color blind, but they have difficulty. And working with color and simulating their mental color. You see? All of this is in the mind, anyway. You project it out there. Really.

Mitchell: Well now, tell me, among the students whom you've had, you've mentioned that some don't have a sensitivity to color.

Schaeffer: Well, very few of them. Color has a tremendous effect on the emotions. It's joyous, you see? But lately I've had difficulty in getting students to work with joyous color. For some reason or other, they work with muted color, and sometimes the muted color isn't like the beautiful muted color of the Japanese. It's just muddy muted color. Not fresh and glowing. A muted color should glow like coals in the grate. They're not inflamed, but they are glowing there. And muted colors can have that rich depth. And of course that's what we're trying to teach, all of that, the mixing color and matching color, and combining it into design.

This summer I was going to have a color class and have them match the beautiful nuances of color in the old Chinese stitchery. You saw my long panel in here on the wall. Beautiful gradations

Schaeffer: --you should go in there and just move that davenport out and sit there up close and look at those gradations of color. Just beautiful.

Well, I was doing something with color all during the war days.

Mitchell: How long were you working at Letterman Hospital?

Schaeffer: I don't know how long, perhaps several months.

Mitchell: We are in the late forties, and you're putting your school back together again after the war. You had to leave St. Anne Street then?

Schaeffer: Yes. Why don't we finish St. Anne Street.

#### Leaving St. Mary's Square

Mitchell: How long did you have to figure out what to do when you knew you were going to have to leave St. Anne Street?

Schaeffer: I didn't have much time to figure out. I wanted to renew my lease. And so if I could get some rebate for all the improvements I had made, or some, at least, but the man who handled the lease, the lawyer who handled the widow's property, put me off. I think he had an inkling that the city was going to build this bomb shelter. And he put me off, and put me off, from time to time. He was always out of town. Then finally it was too late. Otherwise I would have had a five-year rent awarded me. But I didn't have the renewed lease.

But the city real estate man was very kind. He'd come out to appraise things, and he saw my plight, and he was instrumental in allowing me \$7,000 to move. But all the improvement! In those days I figured I'd put in about \$25,000 to \$30,000 or more over the years in improvement in that building. And the landlady was so appreciative that she said--you see, I never went to her to have the improvements made--and she said, "Mr. Schaeffer, you know my daughters would go through this in five minutes if I left it to them. I fixed it in my will that nothing can be done about that building until five years after my death."

So I always felt I was safe for five years and I could put in some more improvements. I finally had it just the way I wanted it, the East West Gallery, and the first floor, and the fine



Schaeffer: workshop down in the basement, everything, and the roof garden, everything was done. My own apartment up on the third floor,\* back, was just fine for the rest of eternity there.

That's where I wanted to stay. Downtown. Right near Chinatown. And downtown, and everywhere, it was just a perfect location for the school. People could drop in. I had so many visitors I had a receptionist down by the door, beside the secretary, see? And then all this...

I had just put in the year before a pressed straw ceiling, like we have in this room here, in the garden room. I don't know how many thousands of dollars went into that. Of course in those days you got the thing done for in the hundreds rather than in the thousands. And I put a ceiling in there. The first floor ceiling was twelve feet high. And I put that in so that we could [not] hear the sounds from the clatter upstairs, on the floor.

That all went down in rubble. And I never went back to view the remains. I never went back to look at it. I never could do it. It just about finished me. I was ready to give up the school. I said to my friends, "I just can't let it get me down. I have to carry on." But I had the idea of renting a big trailer and furnishing it with my reference material and teaching equipment, and going around the country and giving lectures on design and color and flower arrangement; to start a mobile school. That all went through my numbed head.

No, that was going to be too much difference and change. So I persuaded myself to look around to find another school location and I found this place on Telegraph Hill, an old, abandoned, rundown kindergarten school that in later years had been used for a school for retarded children. The windows were broken, the roof leaked, but it was for rent. The city owned it and gave me two years free rent in it. That was kind. I appreciated that.

#### Finding a New Place for the School

Schaeffer: Then I had a friend who had gone down to San Salvador, Jack Amthor. They had a wallpaper store on Sutter Street, and I had helped them select their wallpaper to begin with, and they carried the first modern textured wallpaper in San Francisco, due to my... see, I had been around Europe, away from this "cow pasture." I was familiar with the Bauhaus textures, you see, and the only

Schaeffer: textured wallpaper that was used in those days by the architects came from Japan and it was called grass cloth. They wanted plain wallpaper. Most people always had to have red roses and pinks, lilies and other realistic motifs on their walls, but modern architects want something plain, you know. And they always used this grass cloth. You can still buy grass cloth. The new textures simulated grass cloth in soft colors. How did I get on that?

Mitchell: The man from the wallpaper place who was your friend.

Schaeffer: He was the son of the wallpaper people, and he made a trip to San Salvador, and he met a San Salvadorian lady who was one of the richest coffee heiresses. It was a case of love at first sight and he married this rich gal. We always kept in touch. He knew that I had to give up this school, and he said, "If you find a place, I'll try to help you get settled," which he did.

After two years this school I was in went up for sale. Now I had a chance to buy it. This real estate man was there, favoring me a little bit because he felt so terribly sorry for me. It wasn't advertised very much. I don't know if I was being favored by City Hall or not. I think I was, because that man was still there and he felt so sorry for me, and I'd put in so much money into that other school.

Oh, by the way, when Herb Caen went along St. Anne Street one day, he wrote in his column, "The eeriest sound I ever heard, Rudy Schaeffer forgot to turn off his telephone." He heard the sound coming up--he pretended he did--coming up from the rubble on St. Anne Street. Somewhere I have that clipping. I saved it, because you know, to get your name in the paper was always free advertising for the school.

Well, anyway, this property came up for sale, and so I wired to my friend in San Salvador. I said, "Come up, it's going to be for sale. If you want to do something for me, why you better buy it for me," which he did. There was no one to bid against him. It came up for \$30,000. What I did, and what he arranged, was to make me a loan. I paid him eight percent. The usual was six percent interest. He owned the property and I paid the interest like rent. The monthly interest on that was \$300, or something like that, and that was all the rent I paid for the first several years. (At St. Anne Street, it was \$90 per month.)

INTERVIEW 7: April 23, 1981

Dr. Chaudhuri

Mitchell: Let's place you on Union Street. That's 1950?

Schaeffer: Yes, 1950 I think, or 1951 maybe. And that was quite a blow.

Mitchell: To have to move from St. Anne Street?

Schaeffer: Yes, and I was very tired, but it seems to me that I had met Dr. Chaudhuri when I was down at St. Anne Street. That's when I contacted the American Academy of Asian Studies, and that was down on Sansome Street.

What took me down there was I got a program of their studies and they had a course in Sanskrit. For some wild reason I thought I would like to study Sanskrit, because I was always interested in the origin of things. (To be original you had to be interested in the origin of things.) I don't know, I can't think for the life of me exactly why I registered for this other course, but that evening there was Dr. Chaudhuri, and Alan Watts giving a joint course on Oriental philosophy. I don't remember just the exact title.

After the lecture I went up to Dr. Chaudhuri and I said, "Dr. Chaudhuri, this is a message that I've been waiting for for ninety-three years. (When I wanted to exaggerate a time, I always said ninety-three years. If people asked me my age, I would say I'm ninety-three, years ago, when I was in my sixties. I never had the realization of being ninety-three until when ninety-three came around. Age doesn't mean much to me.)

The next time, the next lecture, I said, "Have you had your dinner?" He hadn't, and I said, "Let's go up to the cafeteria," and so we went up there and had dinner together. This was in 1949. That's when our long close friendship began. Two years

Schaeffer: passed and in the meantime, I had to move up to Union Street, and I had an extra room up there. There was an apartment in the rear of this school building and I said to Dr. Chaudhuri, "You come up." He was living in a little dumpy hotel down on Kearny Street and I had him come up and stay up there with me.

He hadn't sent for his wife and two children yet. He had been here two years, and he was eager to have them come to San Francisco to join him, but he was getting a very small fee for his lectures at the academy and I said, "Why don't you give a course in Indian art, symbolism of Indian art," which he was very proficient in, symbolism, not so much aesthetics. Like the dance of Shiva and the arts of India. That way he raised funds to send for his wife and children.

Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg, who I think I mentioned before, was really responsible for his coming to San Francisco. He had been in India, and he had visited Sri Aurobindo. He asked the great philosopher who would be the best man to come to America to be an exponent of his philosophy, because he was thinking about the Academy of Asian Studies, to bring the message of Aurobindo to America. And Aurobindo answered without a doubt, Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, and so that's how he came and how I made the connection.

Dr. Spiegelberg and Dr. Chaudhuri and I scoured all of that North Beach area and out the Marina to find an apartment where the Chaudhuris could live. Well, we didn't find anything. Nobody wanted children, and especially foreign children. Because many people associated foreign people with Mexicans, Chinese and others, they didn't want any Indian children. So we gave up for the time being. We thought we could find something eventually. I had this rather spacious apartment in the back of the school, so I said, "Let's screen off a part of the big living room and make a bedroom out of it and you all stay here for a while until we find a suitable place."

Well, time came when they arrived, Bina and the two little girls. The wife had a master's degree, and these two delightful children, two little girls, Shipra, three, and Rita, five. My friends said, "Rudolph, he'll have those children around him about a couple of days and they'll drive him crazy. That won't last very long." Some of my friends said that. However, to the contrary, the longer they were there, the less we were interested in looking for an apartment.

They were such delightful guests to have and when Christmas-time came, I got the two children little tricycles. They were so crazy about the tricycles that in the middle of dinner, they'd have to get up and tricycle around the big living room. [laughs]



Schaeffer: Then the little one went down to the kindergarten. (What was the name of that lady, she still has her kindergarten in San Francisco but she was right at the foot of the hill there, on Union Street.) The little one went to kindergarten to learn English. She didn't even speak English when she came.

And regarding the evolution of the appreciation of color in San Francisco, the mother had beautiful saris in chartreuse and turquoise and all those lovely modern colors, and beautiful pinks, but the children had American clothes, imported to Calcutta, very ordinary looking clothes. I said, "Let's go and see if we can find something in colors." So we went to the Emporium, and we went to the White House, City of Paris, we went to all of those different stores, but you know, in 1950 or 1951, it was all the same kind of things, polka dots, and pale blue, baby pink, for children to wear. Now think of today, you can get the whole spectrum in children's clothes, but in those days, we couldn't find anything.

Dr. Chaudhuri wanted to have meditation meetings, and he wanted to have them on Sunday, and I said, "We just can't have them every Sunday, we have to have them every other Sunday." He agreed, because I had to have, being very busy every day, some interval. The attendance in those meditation meetings developed into a cultural integration society.

#### Interest in Oriental Art

Schaeffer: I was in touch then with the Indian consulate, and they would have guests come visit the school. That's when we had a big exhibition of Indian art, for our East West Gallery, which I think I've talked about before, haven't I? We had a big auditorium there at the new school, which we again called the East West Gallery. We had borrowed many pieces for it. Gump's was very generous in loaning Indian art.

That's when I put in a whole series of lectures on Indian art in the curriculum of the school by Lewis MacRitchie, who passed on several years ago. He was an early student of mine in design and color, but he went to the University of California and specialized in Indian art history. He was the only distinguished scholar of Indian art in the West as far as I know. There was a distinguished scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. (I'd have to find her name, she should be recorded in there, too. I'll find her name.) And she was one of the scholars who came out for

Schaeffer: the Brundage symposium twelve or thirteen years ago. But Lewis was the only one out here. For years, he gave a series of lectures on Indian art in the school, attended by many of the founders of the Society of Asian Art today. They attended the lectures of Ching Wah Lee too, for Chinese art. The school played a considerable role in the appreciation of Oriental art in San Francisco at that time. Well, the University of California, of course, was well established in Oriental art, for many years.

Mitchell: So there was a decade of Chinese influence and then a decade of Indian influence.

Schaeffer: And those influences through the East West Gallery, those were very provocative of interest in Oriental art. We had one very interesting exhibition of Indian art and then we had an exhibition of Chinese art, of Chinese prints, Chinese snuff bottles, and then also I had exhibitions of fifty pieces of my collection.

When I started my East West Gallery at St. Anne Street, I also entertained the idea of establishing a small museum in connection with the East West Gallery, but I dropped that extravagant idea when finally the Asian Art Museum was founded. This was all prior to the city's acquisition of the Brundage collection. In our classes, in Ching Wah's classes, in these classes in Indian art, were the founders of the Asian Art Society, which later brought the Brundage collection to San Francisco. So the school played--even though it might have been a minor part--it played really a significant part in the early influence.

Mitchell: It seems to me that it provided the setting.

Schaeffer: Provided the setting of appreciation, yes.

Mitchell: That may not seem like a whole lot, but I think it's everything.

Schaeffer: And it was due to Ching Wah Lee that I made my historic collection of Chinese ceramics, and that's why I am going to dedicate my ceramics catalogue to Ching Wah.

### The Chaudhuri Family

Schaeffer: After this digression, let's get back to Chaudhuri and the beginning of the cultural integration fellowship with Chaudhuri. The Chaudhuris would have stayed on except for one thing. My room at the apartment was quite separate, but I would hear Bina and Haridas laughing and joking, oftentimes way into the night. They were a very joyous couple.

Schaeffer: One morning, at breakfast I said, "All this family needs is a little boy. You've got two girls and now you need a little boy, to complete this family." I was just joking, of course, but in due time there were indications that there was to be an addition to the family. [chuckles] Lo and behold, it turned out to be a boy. [laughter] Dr. Chaudhuri often said later, as this boy was growing up, "Well, Rudy, you ordered him and called him out of the blue."

Anyway, that was the reason why they finally made preparations to find an apartment, because we thought it best not to have on the other side of the East West Gallery partition, a baby squalling during a lecture. They found a nice apartment on Castro Street-- this was before it was taken over by the gays. I loaned them some furniture and bedding and a lot of things, which turned out to be a gift. They got their apartment fixed so that it was comfortable, and Chaudhuri then had his meetings in their own apartment, and then later they moved into a large house.

The sister of the Mr. Johnson who gave the Palace of Fine Arts to the city was one who was in attendance at those meditation meetings at the school, also a former student. They were quite a wealthy family and she furnished the Chaudhuris with this house with a lot and garage on the corner of Dolores and 24th Street. That is now the California Institute of Integral Studies. That's where Chaudhuri held his series of lectures. At the Union Street school, he gave lectures too.

For twenty years I took Dr. Chaudhuri's lectures on Indian philosophy, Oriental philosophy, Buddhism, Hinduism, Tantratism and Taoism in China. I took all those courses, but I never worked for a degree or credit. I didn't want to be that much involved to get a degree and have to write a thesis and do more exacting research.

Finally I did get a diploma. Chaudhuri felt that I had absorbed enough to get a diploma, and it's in the library there. The richness of my work with Chaudhuri can never be estimated. He was a constant spiritual inspiration.

Mitchell: You studied with Ching Wah Lee the history of China?

Schaeffer: Yes, Ching Wah continued to lecture on Union Street.

Mitchell: And then you added to that your studies of Buddhism and Hinduism and the Chinese philosophies?

Schaeffer: Chaudhuri's lectures weren't given as a curriculum in the school. Occasionally he gave a lecture to the whole student body of the school. I studied personally. Ching Wah Lee's lectures, and also Lewis MacRitchie's lectures on Indian art, were part of the school curriculum.

Schaeffer: Oh, at that time too, toward the end of the St. Anne Street era, I contacted Chiang Yee, the author of the Silent Traveler books, who later wrote The Silent Traveler in San Francisco. His works are quite well known, and he died just recently, in China.

Mitchell: Did he teach at the school?

Schaeffer: He lectured on Chinese art, Chinese painting, and calligraphy. Whenever he came to San Francisco, he always came and visited me and gave a talk at the school.

### Frank Lloyd Wright

Schaeffer: I had a kind of a way of inveigling these VIPs to talk to the students. At St. Anne Street, Frank Lloyd Wright visited, but at Union Street he gave a talk to the students. I was so pleased when he said at the end of his talk, "Well, young people, you're in good hands." [laughs] In his somewhat blunt way, "You're in good hands," meaning that I was doing a good job.

Mitchell: He approved.

Schaeffer: Yes, because in those days the school was a kind of an avant garde, and here in the West a part of the whole modern movement, and of course he was interested in modern architecture, and a great influence. As the Bauhaus was a great influence in the field of applied art, he was the great master, revered master, of architecture, in Europe even before he was recognized here in the western countries.

That was the last time he visited the school, just a year before he died. That little group of figures up there was standing in the library, and he saw that and admired it. A few weeks after his visit, I got a call at 5 o'clock in the morning from Taliesin East, and he said, "Schaeffer, you remember that little group of nine wise men, I would like to have you send that to me so I could have a lifesize copy made of it."

"Well, Mr. Wright, " I said, "that's one of my most precious objects in my collection. I am afraid I'll have to think about it, because it might have something happen to it." I was as frank as that with him. I put it off and put it off answering and he didn't call me. I knew it was just a whim of his at that moment. Well, I procrastinated too long. There would not have been time to make a replica lifesize, and that was the year he passed away. So it's still sitting up there on the shelf.



- Schaeffer: Mark Tobey often told me, and Mark Tobey had been very much around, he said it was one of the finest group ceramic portraits he'd ever seen, and I believed him. It's late Ming Szechwan. And the portraits, each one is an individual character.
- Mitchell: What is the subject?
- Schaeffer: Nine wise men examining a scroll with a yang and yin symbol. It's a tremendously moving thing. It's in perfect condition.
- Mitchell: How did you happen to find it?
- Schaeffer: In Chinatown, from the original owner of Hankow Tassel Co., which is on Grant Avenue and is run now by Tommy Chuck, his son. I used to go in there often and reminisce. And in that same store I bought that lemon-yellow ceramic pomelo. Right there it sits. Beautiful color. Bluish leaves and chartreuse body. Yes, I have many treasures from that store.

#### Finding Potrero Hill School Site

Mitchell: You eventually had to leave the Union Street school address.

Schaeffer: Yes, I was paying my rent as interest on the loan my friend made, as I explained. Then in 1955 I incorporated the school as a nonprofit institution, and the idea was to buy it from him, but prices had risen, and he wanted far more than what he'd paid for it, and my newly-elected board said, "We just can't raise that much money."

In that state of mind, something interesting happened to me. I had a theft at Union Street, considerable theft. Today, if I had those Chinese things, they would bring thousands of dollars. Somebody removed them from the cupboard in the hallway one night. So I went to a medium, a very good medium in Monterey, and she gave me some pointers, told me if I went to New York I would find them in the antique shop, but I couldn't go to New York. I went back later and talked to her again.

Then she gave me a hint about where I'd find a new place, a new location. She said something about a hill and a building with many windows facing the west, looking down over a cliff, the other side of the building gone to its native grass. That's all the information she gave me at the time.

Schaeffer: It happened then that some friends from Carmel and I were taking a mutual friend on a ride. She had been ill. We called for her at just about sunset, and we drove around. I'd never been up here on Potrero Hill, and it was just about the time there was a kind of exodus from the other parts of the city to Potrero Hill, artists especially were coming over here, and buying places and renting places, for some reason or other because of the new freeway. So we came to explore and we came up to Potrero and about 18th Street.

I said, "My gracious, if we're going on Potrero Hill, we better turn off from Potrero here somewhere." So we turned off on 18th Street and came up Utah, and right here was this big three-story building looming up, and the windows were all boarded up, they'd been smashed in, and the plaster had fallen off from the outside. Oh, it looked like something that the cat would drag in, honestly. I said to my friends, "That looks like an interesting old dump," not thinking about a school or anything, "Let's stop here."

We parked right there at the corner, and I went around the corner and climbed up those steps. There was a barrier that I had to crawl through halfway up the stairs, or two-thirds of the way up the stairs. Then I went into the deserted garden. The garden was not much of a garden. There was an old trash burner sitting over in the middle of it. But I wandered along and I had a strange feeling of quietude and peace. The freeway had just been put in, and there was no traffic on the freeway, very quiet. I had a kind of a strange feeling that I couldn't quite describe ever afterward.

I walked to the rear and here was this cottage. There were windows all boarded up and padlocks on the door and I looked around, I caught my breath, I shouted out, "This is it! This is it!" Just like that. My mind went back to the medium.

Mitchell: It had all the ingredients.

Schaeffer: Here is this garden gone to native grass, and here is this building with many windows looking out to the west, looking over a cliff; four digits in the number, also she had mentioned. In less than two weeks we had purchased the property and a new site for the school had been found.

It was Mr. and Mrs. Saunders who originally took me to the medium that evening. Mrs. Saunders and myself, and this guest that we were taking for a ride, were together when the house was found. I'd never been on this hill.

Schaeffer: Potrero Hill used to be a goat ranch, and I think a lady had her goat ranch over here. She fought the freeway, tooth and nail, to save her goat ranch on the hill. To take away her goat ranch, that was criminal.

I've always been mystified by the name Mariposa. Sometime I must research it. Mariposa Street is between 17th and 18th. We came up 18th Street. Here was the corner of Mariposa and Utah. Why were all the cross streets, from 12th or 13th Street on up to 26th Street all numbered, and there was only one street with a name, Mariposa, which means butterfly in Spanish. There must have been a rendezvous for butterflies here in the early Spanish days. This maybe was a western street, a cross-street before the other streets were put in, when Mission district was a big cattle ranch. Potrero means upper ranch and this was the upper cattle ranch, that was the lower cattle ranch.

Mitchell: Maybe that was the connecting road?

Schaeffer: It would be interesting to find out.

A friend of mine, Douglas Vernon, is making very exhaustive research on all these areas because he bought, recently, one of the oldest ranch houses that was up here at the end of Fulton Street. He restored it, and he was just here for dinner the other night. He's now on our board. He's going to publish a book on those early days, which there's very little written about. There's much written about the establishing of the Dolores Mission, but in those ranch days, where these Spanish had grants, he's doing research on that.

#### Move From Union Street to Potrero Hill Ends in Illness

Mitchell: What about the last days at Union Street school. Now you made the decision to come over here to Potrero Hill, but was it hard to convince other people?

Schaeffer: I had my first real serious illness in my life, which I didn't recover from for a long time, and I think that one thing that contributed to my illness was the anxiety of moving. And deep inside of my psyche I had made the decision to turn over the school from my ownership to a board of trustees. The school was no longer mine, an institution I had created with my life blood mixed with many trials and tears.

Mitchell: After all, you had uprooted before.

Schaeffer: Yes, I'd gone through the first move from St. Anne once, and nine years later I went through that thing again, and I said when I got established here, "Never again, we're going to stay here." But it almost, as they said, "done me in," and that's when my heart got in trouble.

Mitchell: You had heart trouble?

Schaeffer: Well, I had fibrillation at that time. You know what fibrillation is? It's a missing beat, your heart misses a beat, at short, uneven intervals.

Mitchell: As if you're holding your breath, or something?

Schaeffer: Well, it's just a very short, then maybe there's two beats close together. Irregular, a little irregularity.

Mitchell: And you could tell that?

Schaeffer: Oh, well, it was very strong. With medication it's under control but I was a year recovering. We moved and everything moved, I gave my first talk here, but I wasn't well. That September, a year afterward in September, I woke up one morning, everything was different, I was in perfect health, except for an arthritic back which still plagues me at times.

Mitchell: It's a tremendous job to move.

Schaeffer: And bless his dear heart, Al Dahn was the mainstay. He had been a student years ago, and then he came to teach, help me with design at Union Street. He stayed with the school all these years and taught design. He was one of my most devoted helpers, teachers, and loyal friend. He had some of the qualities of Peter Docili. Nothing was too hard for him, always ready to embark on anything that I wanted done at the school. He was a very psychic person too. His mother was a medium of sorts.

Mitchell: He came to you during the Union Street school?

Schaeffer: Yes, but he had studied at St. Anne school, and then he came and helped move.



Jimmy Yamagishi

Schaeffer: Also, another person who should be mentioned was Jimmy Yamaguchi. He came right after World War II. He was Japanese and had been in a concentration camp like all the Japanese. The disgrace of the United States to put those Japanese into concentration camps, along with the people, the pioneers, who established the Tea Garden in the Golden Gate Park! Those elderly people languished in a concentration camp! That's the blot on American history for sure.

Mitchell: It certainly is. Jimmy was a student at the school?

Schaeffer: No. I needed a janitor after the war, because I was the chief cook and bottle washer. [laughs] During the war I had no help, I had to do all the janitor work too, I had no help. Everybody gone to war. And I had that one little class that I mentioned one time at 5 o'clock. So Jimmy came that year and was with us twenty-two years. He was the one that helped me develop the garden here. He helped me move. I have a very nice picture of him helping move, putting things carefully in the truck to take up to Telegraph Hill. Jimmy Yamagishi was also the caretaker of the Conservatory of Music out on 19th Avenue.

So he helped us move here, too. Twice he went through this. When I was ill that time I mentioned, he would go home, and have his dinner, after he'd been here working here in the afternoon, he'd go way across town and have his dinner and he would have his wife put up a dinner for me and bring it to me.

Mitchell: You've inspired a tremendous amount of dedication among a lot of people.

Schaeffer: Well, I had a cause, I was dedicated, and the instrument for something which was important for the twentieth century. I felt it was important. It was like Mrs. Bechtel said, "Rudolph, why do you work so hard?" I said, "I work for the glory of God." [laughs] But it was true!

Jimmy died of a heart attack, suddenly, when I was in New York. I was coming back from Europe, and then I hastened, dropped everything. I was going to stay in New York for at least a week, but I hastened back just in time to sit with the family, at the funeral. He had requested that.

The students all liked Jimmy, everybody around here did, and he was not only the gardener but he was the caretaker. He did everything so easily--master carpenter, plumber, he could do

Schaeffer: everything. I never had to send out for somebody. He fixed electric things too. So they, the students, wanted to get something for the garden.

Jimmy didn't care much for Japanese lanterns, I knew that, but I was down at Marsh's in Monterey and in their front entrance yard they had some stone things, and among them was an old curved stone bridge, like slabs resting on bamboo logs, very interesting, and a chip out of the corners. It was old, perhaps centuries old, from some old Japanese garden. I thought, "Here's Jimmy, a bridge between Japan and California," so I said, "That's it, that's the memorial bridge."

It's out there, as a memorial. Whenever I walk across it, I can think of Jimmy and his devotion to the school. I wanted to place it in the garden so it could be seen from the school, and also from my cottage windows. It took me a year to figure out where to place it, so there it is.

Mitchell: That is another example to me of your attention to detail and meaning. The meaning of the person and the meaning of the object, not as an object in itself but as something which conveys a feeling.

Schaeffer: I guess it must be a characteristic of mine. I think I'm motivated by sentiment, but there's a difference between sentiment and sentimentality.

Mitchell: What is it? Can you describe it?

Schaeffer: Sentiment has to do with the deeper meaning of action and things. To be sentimental is kind of surface, isn't it? It carries with it a bit of affectation, seems to me. A bit of weakness or shallowness.

Sentiment is back of what we did that following year, when the bridge was all set. I thought it would be so nice to have it dedicated to Jimmy. Jimmy was an ardent Buddhist, and active in the Buddhist church here. On his birthday, I sent out invitations to his family, and had his family send invitations to whomever they wanted to ask, so there were about fifty people here, on a Sunday. The Buddhist priest came to make the dedication. It was in the spring and it was a kind of a cool day, a cloudy day so we couldn't have it outdoors, so we had to have it in the gallery, but after the ceremony, everybody was asked to come and walk across the bridge, and walk back again.

Remembrance of Hospitality--the Tramp Visitors

Michell: Would you say that you got some of these natural responses from being raised in a certain kind of way?

Schaeffer: I think so. My parents were very hospitable people. In the community in which I lived we had certain old friends that we invited to dinner at our house. Nothing was too much trouble, to be entertaining, and we didn't have servants as we did it ourselves. It was on the farm. (In fact, there were no hospitals and maybe just one doctor in the community. Mother attended a birth and once she had to perform the duties of an undertaker.)

Mitchell: Tell me also about your own spiritual training, your own spiritual upbringing.

Schaeffer: I had to go to the Lutheran catechism school. I had to take time at the end of the public school day and go to study the catechism, and then be confirmed, and partake in communion in the Lutheran church. My mother and father were founders of the first Lutheran church in this little town. When the preacher would come every month or every two weeks from Saginaw to this little town, he'd be put up at our house in what we called our spare room.

You know, I was like so many children, I took my parents for granted. Like you take the air you breathe for granted. You don't think how blessed you are. My mother visited me always over the years. But my mother, I don't think she always took me for granted. [laughs] She visited me in Columbus, Ohio; she came to Pasadena; she came twice to San Francisco; and the last time she came and brought my father along. They were here during the winter months, out at that house, "Old Swish," that we talked about.

As I look back, they were very hospitable people, our family. We had tramps in those days that stopped for a meal, and I often said to my mother, "I think they have a mark on our gate." [chuckles] It was the first farmhouse outside of town. I don't know, you might call them hippies today, or in the 1960s, but then they were tramps and stole rides on the freight trains going from town to town--hobos.

One evening a tramp knocked at the door, wanted something to eat, and Mother had just made a batch of bread. It was after dinner and nothing but bread was in sight, so she gave him a loaf of bread--that's all she had to give him, at that moment.

Schaeffer: The next morning, when I went to school, I saw this bread torn apart and scattered over the side of the road, and I burst into tears. I don't need to tell you why.

One of the tramps was a real person, a real person, his name was Alfred Seggins. He would come and stay for weeks or months during the wintertime, and help my father around with a few chores and all. What I remember was he was a great storyteller, and we'd sit around the warm kitchen stove, my brother and I and my sister--she hadn't left home at that time--and listen to his tales. Sometimes he would stop and we'd ask, "What are you stopping for? Why don't you go on?" like kids do, you see, and he'd say, "I have to think of what comes next." He was just making up the stories as he went along! I remember that as vividly as if it was yesterday.

What the stories were about I don't remember, but they stimulated our imagination. That man formed such a close friendship with my parents that later on he came and bought a little piece of land just north of our home and there he wrote--I don't know whether or not his stories were ever published, but he spent his winters up there writing.

When I went later to Europe in 1908, I had the address of his sister in England--he was an Englishman--and I always regretted that I didn't go and call on her, but in those days, I don't know, I was so busy hopping from one thing to another.

#### Dorothea Nourse and Healing Practice

Mitchell: Let's get up to the stories about the truth teacher, her influence in that period.

Schaeffer: This started at St. Anne Street. I had a children's art class on Saturdays, and she also had a children's class where she told stories with a spiritual or moral flavor. After my class in drawing and painting, some of the kids went in the room above and joined her group. Her class followed my class. She would tell them a story, and then they would make a drawing of it.

Now, how did I contact the Home of Truth? Anyway, it was a residence out on Sacramento Street, just beyond Van Ness. The house is still there. I used to attend those meetings in a quest for spiritual values.



Schaeffer: When I graduated from high school, something in my nature didn't click with the whole doctrine of the Lutheran church. I couldn't go along with it all. It was all right for certain people, but for me I couldn't go along with everything. Maybe I was too immature to understand. So I was searching in those years in Columbus, Ohio, and in Pasadena I used to go on Sunday mornings frequently to a Presbyterian church, or to any church. I felt that was something that belonged with Sundays.

When I came to San Francisco, I somehow connected up with the Home of Truth. (This is going very slow in my thoughts now, I'm trying to dig out something.) Anyway, I met Dorothea, and I would go to her once a week to practice meditation, and she had a little bowl that you put whatever you could spare in that little bowl, and I never could spare more than fifty cents--that was in the 1930s, or 1920s. I would take all my troubles to her, and she would philosophize and I have lots of those notes I saved somewhere.

Mitchell: And you felt that she was full of wisdom.

Schaeffer: Yes. And she helped me with my personal problems. She often said, "With Rudolph I used to make him get down on the floor, and I'd walk up and down his back with hob nailed boots," [laughs] figuratively speaking.

But you know, somehow or other, when I first heard Dr. Chaudhuri, then Dorothea Nourse's teaching began to click. Chaudhuri later furnished me with a better understandable frame of reference than the Christian Bible. After studying Oriental thought and philosophy, I began to understand the inner meaning of what Miss Nourse was trying to teach me.

Now this is how this Home of Truth got started: back in those early days is when Mary Baker Eddy founded the Christian Science Church. She had several disciples, devoted disciples, who didn't go along with her idea of establishing a church. They said no, don't organize the church, because then it will be crystalized, it won't grow. This, I was told from a reliable source, was their argument. I think it was true. These followers --the man who founded Unity in Kansas City, the famous Unity Centers, and they have Unity Center here in San Francisco, and another man down in San Diego, and there was Emma Curtis Hopkins, who was her secretary, who also didn't go along with her, and who was a teacher of Dorothea Nourse's. The Truth Center, here in San Francisco, and there was also one in Oakland, was an offshoot of Christian Science, the free teachers.

Schaeffer: So, Dorothea Nourse grounded me in these healing principles.

Mitchell: What were they?

Schaeffer: Well, the Christian Science practitioners have to go through a course of study. I had that whole course, through Dorothea Nourse, healing, and I don't mean to boast, but I've had some success in it, more success with other people than I have had with myself.

Mitchell: Can you give me an example Or would you want to?

Schaeffer: Oh, there are many of my students whom I've helped. They claimed that I helped them. You make many statements that are positive, they're all positive statements, like saying, "all is well, all is well," and refusing to make any illness real.

Mitchell: Yes, that sounds very right.

Schaeffer: I was very strong in that for many years, but sometimes you lose it, it gets covered up and you don't really lose it, but you get covered up with negativity around you. The pressure of negativity, today, is--oh, indescribable! I'm going through it right now. The school is in a trough, now. And I know it takes great perseverance to climb up to the top again. I've allowed certain people to take over. It's been my fault, I was the one that allowed them to take over. One must be strong and not too gentle.

Mitchell: But, of course, recognizing it and dealing one by one by one, brings you to the place where you can move again.

Schaeffer: Yes, but it seems on the bottom of the trough right now, and it's been on the bottom, not so much in the past but it's gone through, over fifty-four years, many, many troughs and many peaks and that's the way life is too. And so what we have to do now is survive.

Mitchell: These healing statements that you acquired, that you learned through this teaching, how did you apply them? Through meditation?

Schaeffer: Yes, surround the individual with love, and visualize golden light surrounding them, light and love, perfection, perfection of being, and using the imagination, which Blake says is a divine gift, to image the person, perfectly well.

Using the Imagination

Mitchell: How do you get into that? How do you teach people to use their imagination?

Schaeffer: That's something that I still have to develop, and I mentioned in that article, but there again my staff has done nothing to pick it up.

Mitchell: I think it's very uncommon. I think it's a very uncommon quality in our culture.

Schaeffer: Imagination is the basis of creativity. I had this experience over a year ago, I got the circulars of a society for imagery, international society. They were going to have a conference in Vienna. I immediately sent my twenty-five dollars to join it, with a letter hoping that they might meet in San Francisco sometime. Well, a year went by and suddenly I got a notice that there's going to be a meeting in San Francisco. And the head of the society, in New York, sent me this message, said that my correspondence had been mislaid and that's why a whole year had passed, practically, and here there was a meeting of this imagery association international at the Jack Tar Hotel.

I got the letter just a day before this meeting, so naturally I had other commitments. I could only attend the first day, but I paid my dues again, another twenty-five dollars, and listened to the first talk and went to one of the meetings, but it was all on therapy. Psychologists thought they had to do therapy for imagery, for people mentally ill, et cetera. I wanted information so I could help my students to better visualize. I don't know, I just didn't get anything out of that.

Anyway, the last I heard, this society was to send out pamphlets and quarterlies, reports, and all. It must have been soundly established because there were people here registered from all over the United States. There's something mysterious about this, so not hearing from anybody, after that was over, after several months, I had photostats made of my check, twenty-five dollar dues, the original dues, and I had a photostat from my letter, and I sent it to the head man in New York, and I've never heard one word. This was months ago, no reply, nothing. Now what is wrong with that? Must be badly organized.

Mitchell: They probably went under, as they say.

Schaeffer: It was a worldwide organization, on imagery. That's something that I've been wanting to explore. I have frustrations on that.

Mitchell: It is something that has been used in the therapeutic community. The doing of art is now something also therapists are becoming involved with. That's why it interests me that you understood intuitively, early, the purpose of art.

Schaeffer: Yes, I classified imagination in those three categories, as I mentioned in that paper. First is memory imagination, that's the important one, and that's what television is destroying today. In reading you activate memory; in reading, mental pictures come up all the time that relate to the things you're experiencing, events you've experienced previously, memory imagination.

Second was transposition, I remember I called it, transposing. Say, for instance, I look at that orange candle there in the candlestick and I can imagine it blue and taller if I wanted to.

Mitchell: Now how do you do that?

Schaeffer: Image. I look at it and I can look away from it and I can see the candlestick with a blue candle in it.

Mitchell: So to help a student do that, what kind of exercises would you give them to help them train that part?

Schaeffer: Well, I'm not sure, and this next year I'm going to organize a course in imagery. I don't know how I'm going to do it yet. I had hoped I'd get help from this image society. Maybe I'll have to institute a course on my own. Do you think I'm smart enough? I don't know. It would be a new venture, anyway.

The next thing, the third category of imagination, is to conjure up an image of something you have never seen. That's creative imagination. To imagine something that you never saw before, like what the little green men from a flying saucer look like, or to be more practical, to design a bird or a flower unlike any that you have ever seen.

Mitchell: There are very few people who can do that, don't you think?

Schaeffer: Yes, but I have been able to do it. Sometimes I have this faculty, when I am about to go to sleep. And I see strange sights very vividly. Scenes. Flowers. People. That I never saw before. I see them clearly. All in fine detail. Right down to a little pebble, or the color and texture of a flower, or a blade of grass. Now where does that come from?

Mitchell: These people that you see, do you eventually meet them?



Schaeffer: Never saw them before or after.

Mitchell: But over the years do any of them appear?

Schaeffer: Not that I know of. When they're faces, that's when I have to change my mind. I can't take it. I have to think of something else.

Mitchell: That must be very hard.

Schaeffer: I can't take some of these faces, and sometimes they're not very pleasant.

Mitchell: I've had some of those.

Schaeffer: I think that must be a common occurrence. They're not very pleasant. And sometimes they're very grotesque. And I shut it off. I can't take it. I have never discussed this with anyone.

Now are these visions real, or are they unreal. Or are they just a figment of your imagination? Nobody knows.

This is a great subject, imagination, and of course all inventions, and all original things, come out of a man's imagination. Mankind had to imagine himself on the moon before he got there, yes. The imagination is a creative instrument of the mind itself, that I believe. If you can image something, it can be brought into visibility. I practiced that with my garden room here.

Where the garden room is between this cottage and the school was just a breezeway, and we stored there all kinds of rocks and driftwood, different things. Every day I would have to walk past that breezeway with all that chaos and stuff there. I wanted a room for flower arrangement in that space, so when I walked past I had to imagine that room there, how it was going to look, how it was going to be there. I had to go and walk into the sliding doors in my imagination, I had to feel those aluminum doors. I had to hear the door when I pushed it back in my imagination. Well, it took a couple of years, but there it was in reality.

Mitchell: At what point did you have the full picture?

Schaeffer: When it turned out it wasn't exactly like I saw it, but it was there. And that's the way I planted the trees around the sidewalk, the poplar trees. I walked around the block, back and forth, and walked under the trees in imagination, and then pretty soon we planted the trees and they were there. [laughs]

- Mitchell: There's another ingredient. Some people do fantasize things and imagine them, but they don't implement them.
- Schaeffer: You have to activate the left side of the brain to implement them. Before this cottage addition was built, I walked into that room many times in my imagination.
- Mitchell: What was the ingredient in your personality, would you say, that got you to implement these ideas?

### Implementing the Ideas

- Schaeffer: The first step would be to get the plans down on paper.
- Mitchell: And to convince other people.
- Schaeffer: Then you go to the City Hall and see if you can build. The City Hall people wanted me to put a fire escape down over the cliff. I said nothing doing, I didn't see it that way, and so we worked it out so the fire escape came down in the garden, where it belonged, where I saw it. But you have opposition to these things, by people involved who have different imaginations.
- Mitchell: Well, that's the point at which many people can't proceed.
- Schaeffer: They let other people decide. It takes courage to implement our imagination, courage.

This property next door, I had a vision when we got settled here; I said, "Let's buy that next door." My board didn't go along with it, said, "Wait, wait, till we raise some money." We could have bought that for \$50,000. Now it's priceless, the owners don't even want to sell it. Then we could have built a building there and had one floor for a gallery, one floor for an auditorium, and one floor for workshops, and a basement for workshops, plenty of room instead of spending all these hundreds of thousands of dollars renting this annex down here, see? Could just as well have gone into that. I had no support from my board.

That's the only drawback between the early days, when I owned my school and when I was boss, and when I turned it into a nonprofit institution. Now if anything happened to me today or tomorrow, the whole property would have to go to another nonprofit institution, or back to the state, owned by the state. With all my improvements and everything, it doesn't belong to me or my heirs.

Mitchell: But it can stay a nonprofit institution.

Schaeffer: Yes.

Mitchell: Which is probably a good idea.

Schaeffer: Yes, but I'm recording something now which I don't know. It's not been decided what's going to happen to the school when I'm no longer here. That's something that we're working out now.

Mitchell: I think that takes a lot of negotiation.

Schaeffer: Yes, I'm working on it now, that's one of my prime concerns, right now. I have other prime concerns: getting my catalogue published, and also that book on rhythm-chromatic design, because there are other institutions who want to get a hold of it, my theories of color.

Mitchell: And those ideas should be out there, published.

Schaeffer: Yes, because it's my original theory and system of teaching and it's an important one. As far as I can see, it will be a real contribution to the study of color and use of color.

Mitchell: There's a great advantage to putting it in writing, and having it in a book with your name on it.

Schaeffer: Yes, and copyrighted, and no matter how much they plagiarize it, I'll have the original credit, where it belongs. It was given to me through intuition, entrusted to me, and I'm duty-bound to bind it in a book.

Mitchell: I think so, I think I can feel that for you too.

Schaeffer: Do you know what the word bindery means? It means to bind an idea, you see. That's why books have two meanings; they have the physical meaning of binding it, but the knowledge is bound in a book, it's bound there. My little poem that I read, said, "Let the knowledge of truth and goodness and beauty be unbound by the reader."

Mitchell: That's beautiful. Did you make that up yourself?

Schaeffer: Yes. For years I've always written something at Christmas. Just yesterday the gardener, who was a pupil here years ago, graduated and now he's doing gardening, said, "You know, Mr. Schaeffer, I have every one of your Christmas cards all

Schaeffer: saved, and I read those poems, those little stanzas, over and over and over and over many, many times."

· Mitchell: You've had many students who've come back, I can tell.

Schaeffer: Yes, it's a richness.



INTERVIEW 8: May 14, 1981

Correspondence Between Outer and Inner Worlds

Mitchell: As we closed last week, we were talking about how it has come full circle from the period of the turn-of-the-century, when your ideas were coming up as a young man teaching, your art education ideas, and now as you're graduating this class, this coming Sunday, there is a moment in which you expressed the feeling to me that the ideas are needed more than ever, with the current attitudes about art.

Schaeffer: Yes, it's so important I think to give heed [I'm speaking now to these students] not only to the outer harmonies in art, and design. They have been studying now for three years the principles governing the outer visual elements of color, form, line, texture, et cetera. They've been studying how to bring these visual elements into harmony and design and into unity. And that's all work in the outer, visual world, in the outer world of sensations, of course not discounting the role of intuition in creativity of design.

How about the inner world? If there's no correspondence between the outer and the inner, there's something greatly amiss, seems to me. In preparation for their work, in the new age, there must be a harmony, a unity of what they do in the outer world, and what they feel and think in the inner world, not only in their private life but in their social life, their professional life.

That's what I would like to speak about, putting more emphasis upon the harmonies, the unities in the inner world, which have a great deal to do with the way we harmonize ourselves with out fellowmen, our interpersonal relationships, and with mankind. Now, far be it for me to give any formulas. Everybody must find their own way, but they must first have a desire. Like

Schaeffer: they first had a desire to learn the principles of harmony and balance and rhythm, unity, in their design, they had to have a desire to do that. They had a desire to achieve beauty, order and design. So therefore, the first thing would be to cultivate a deep and sincere desire to be harmoniously integrated inwardly, in the inner space, in the inner world.

Mitchell: How would you imagine cultivating that desire in students?

Schaeffer: We all need inspiration, and we look to inspiration perhaps in three major sources. First of all would be our contact with nature, and that is one of the reasons why we have the arrangement of flowers and plant material to balance the creative work with inert materials, like paints, colors, and paper and pencils and things for construction. We work with the same principles in things of nature, rocks, and driftwood, plant material, branches, and flowers, and so on. Some people don't need that, but our students, design students, most of them need that stimulus, that inspiration. Of course with me I was raised on a farm, I never heard of the word flower arrangement. We "fixed" the flowers like we "fixed" breakfast. [laughs]

Secondly, are the achievements of our fellowman, mankind, for inspiration, the arts, the sciences, the literature, the humanities, all the achievements that express beauty, and truth. Of course so much of this in our education today is so lacking.

And then thirdly, there must be this desire to explore the inner self, the wellsprings of the deeper self. Nobody can make us do that, but we have somehow or other to listen to our inner voice.

That is why I've emphasized [and I'm talking to them now, you see] that's why I've emphasized all through these three years of attendance in my classes, to center themselves. Every session is begun with a centering, but that should be done individually, at least in the start of the day, or maybe several times a day, especially when they start out on a creative assignment, to get themselves quiet and centered and get the intuitive impulse from that inner world, wherein resides all the creative impulses.

Mitchell: How do you go about that centering with your students?

Schaeffer: That is something that I can't go into in great detail. I think each student must find his own way, but if he knows what he's after, he'll find his own way. Each of us has an invisible imaginary center of being. One might focus in imagination on the center of the forehead, the heart or solar plexus, whatever.

Mitchell: What I meant, Rudolph, when you actually do have a moment or a ritual moment at the beginning of the class, is it a moment where everyone sits quietly?

Schaeffer: Everyone sits quietly, some with closed eyes, for a minute or so, maybe more or less according to the mood of the morning. So many students have said, "Oh, how I appreciate that attention that we have for centering, because that has carried me through in later experiences." But not all our students respond, you see, not all of them.

Mitchell: I'm sure that's the perennial problem for teachers. You never know which one is really receiving.

#### An Invocation

Schaeffer: You never know. If one gets it, then that morning is worthwhile. Or if one student out of the whole group gets the total message, the whole year's teaching has been worthwhile. I have to console myself with that idea. Sometimes I get terribly discouraged.

Mitchell: The people you do affect, the students whom you do affect, are affected for their lifetimes, it's not just learning a new technique, it's integrating a way to be creative, which they can apply in whatever they do.

Schaeffer: Yes, in everything they do, they apply it.

I asked them to write what design means to them, and it was amazing what came. I'm going to quote from some of those articles for my graduation talk Sunday. Then I'm going to ask Michael to say a few words, and then I'll finish with my favorite invocation.

Mitchell: Which is that?

Schaeffer: Shall I give it to you?

Mitchell: Yes.

Schaeffer: All right. "From a point of light within the mind of God, let light stream forth, into the minds of men. From a point of love within the heart of God, let love stream forth into the hearts of men. From the center where the will of God is known, let purpose guide the little wills of men, that purpose which

Schaeffer: the Master knows and serves. From the center which we call the race of men, let the plan of love and light work out and may the door be sealed where evil dwells. Let love and light and power restore the plan on earth."

Mitchell: That's beautiful. Did you write it yourself?

Schaeffer: No, I didn't write it. That I memorized from some writings from a group called the New Age Group, a meditation group. I've lost track of them, this is all about ten years ago. They had their centers all over the world, and one in Berkeley, I think. It is a good statement before meditation.

I left out a sentence, because we have some Jewish students. It should read, "From a point of love within the heart of God, let love stream forth, into the hearts of men, let Christ return to earth." It could be interpreted as the Christ consciousness returning to earth, but you know, there is the belief in many Christian sects that Christ will manifest himself in person again.

### Learning as a System

Mitchell: Now let's go back in time to when you began your school on this site on Potrero Hill. We've talked about how you found the place, and made the decision to move, but we haven't started you here.

Schaeffer: Well, this period since 1960, when we moved here, and now it's 1981, twenty-one years, this period of my life has not been the active, creative period.

In a way it has, because I have transformed a place which was most mundane in its condition: ugly, stucco falling out from the walls, exterior walls, and windows smashed and boarded up and what was once a garden gone to ruin. It was just a deserted shell.

My job over the early years was to make it a place of beauty and inspiration and developing a more comprehensive system of teaching, and especially in this last year or two, the whole idea of what I've been teaching in color seemed to bring in my mind a unified form and sequence for the first time, complete in its comprehension, as complete as I can realize at this moment. It might be it can be developed further, but it's what I have a great passion to get into print form now. That's my goal now,



Schaeffer: in the next couple of years to publish this system of teaching, of learning how not only to use color in daily life, how to use it in design, in architecture, how to use it in all creativeness where color is a factor, to express in color whatever mood one feels appropriate in time and place.

We have to pursue a system of learning, and then when we've mastered it, we no longer need that system. We have our own system. The rhythm-chromatic system is a creative system more than just an intellectual one.

Mitchell: In a sense then, what you're saying is we integrate the system into our personal way of expression.

Schaeffer: Yes, and then our expression is due to our personal system, intelligent system that we've developed. Of course, a lot of people never integrate it, they always follow imitatively the system. But I can't control that. The system is based on universal principles of harmony, balance and rhythm. The individual reveals his or her "thumb print" in artistic expression.

Mitchell: Anyway, when you came to this school site you had already consolidated all of your teaching into a curriculum that had its own momentum.

Schaeffer: Yes. Gradually what happened over the years was there seemed to be an element of fragmentation coming in. It has been this adjustment to the fragmentation that has been my problem over these last ten or fifteen years, because so much of the teaching which was unique and from my own intuition was carried out mainly by myself, and a limited number of teacher disciples, but as the years passed on, there were fewer and fewer teachers whom I had trained. More people had to come in from the outside, to present techniques and various aspects of design and color, and those teachers, as a rule were not grounded in the philosophy and principles that I teach personally and which my student teachers support me in. Very good teachers, from the outside, trained elsewhere, excellent teachers in their own right, but when they come into this atmosphere, this fragmentation takes place. That's what we're going through right now.

Now it's come to a crisis, where I've got to do something drastic to restore, and the coming year is a matter of restoration, and renaissance. I was fortunate enough to find Harry Donlevy to help me in this. I didn't have to look far because he's been around for many years and been a good friend and supporter of my ideals in the school. So we're working together to make a restoration. So there's nothing lost. It's only that I have to be stronger in pursuance of unity of the school.

Building a Collection

- Mitchell: Earlier you discussed buying color block prints in China in the 1930s. Had you started collecting any other Oriental art in the thirties?
- Schaeffer: Oh yes, I had from the very beginning. In 1915, when I came to San Francisco, I haunted Chinatown for its colored silks and stitchery, and embroidery in wonderful color combinations, and ceramic, whether it be a pink bowl with a yellow lining, or a yellow bowl with a pink lining, or a green bowl with a blue lining.
- All these wonderful ceramics in color. Oh, it was heaven! And then I had all this to teach with. That's how I collected it. All my collection was made for teaching, for inspiration, especially for flower arrangements and table settings. There was nothing on the American market. You might find something in the advanced studios in Europe. I'd occasionally bring back, from Vienna workshops, some lovely things in color, shape and form and all, but here in San Francisco, there was an abundance of Chinese things. For very little, you could buy a lovely set of bowls in beautiful colors.
- Mitchell: Would you take students out with you maybe even into Chinatown?
- Schaeffer: Oh yes. They loved shopping in Chinatown.
- Mitchell: When you would be collecting these articles in Chinatown, what was it like?
- Schaeffer: Well, you just went snooping around, that's all. And you'd see something that was just a nice form, a little bowl or little dish, or bits of beautiful stitchery. Or here would be a whole shelf of bowls of all the prismatic colors.
- Mitchell: I bet that when you went in these little shops, you didn't pick the first bowl?
- Schaeffer: Oh no, not everything was to my taste, and some pieces were more perfect than others.
- Mitchell: What I'm saying is that if you had students with you or if they were part of this process, they must have learned a lot about how you saw things.
- Schaeffer: Oh yes, because all of them became collectors themselves. (Chinatown merchants knew us and gave us generous discounts.)

Mitchell: And they probably saw your process of discernment.

Schaeffer: Take, for instance, Alice Papworth with whom I just talked on the phone, an early student of mine in those days. Her whole apartment is furnished with oriental things. When she came from Salt Lake City down here to study with me, way back in the 1930s, she started collecting.

I collected things from the very beginning that corresponded, had relationship to the modern movement in design and color. What was starting in Europe was the modern movement toward geometric simplicity, getting back to geometric form, geometric cubes and cylinders and spheres. It was the influence of Cézanne in cubism, in painting. It was also in architecture. It entered into the crafts, especially the Viennese school, Vienna workshop, which I visited in 1914.

When I went to Chinatown, I found stacks of little dishes, round dishes, little flat cylinders stacked up in a big cylinder, which was the replica of one of the silos up in Michigan, grain silo, which Frank Lloyd Wright introduced into Europe at the turn of the century. Well, I found these same forms.

China had never left that consciousness of simple geometric form, which had to be rediscovered at the turn of the century in Europe. What Europe did, the painters, the craftsmen, they made these stark. They would do a flower container in a pure white cylinder, or maybe it could be color, or the architects would do a building in a cylinder and cubic form like the one that's just going up now after nearly one hundred years. They're still following that, which is perfectly all right, of course, but the Chinese always embellished the surface of forms with color and texture and pattern which related to the form and enriched the surface of the form.

Not like the Dresden ware, making a form and then adding on a lot of realistic three-dimensional clap trap. The Chinese never did anything like that. They never destroyed or obliterated the form. If the form was decorated, the decoration had to be integrated with the form. Those are the things that I collected later too, in the Sung and Tang, the early dynasties, back to the neolithic things, when the decoration and the form were integrated as one. That's what makes my collection a little different from a lot of other collections. I must add here, however, that not all Chinese things were that perfect in design and color. They did some ugly things too in each period.

Mitchell: When you taught with them, you would point all this out but also use them as pure examples of form.

Schaeffer: Yes, my collection was unique in that way.

Most writers, on ceramics especially, stress a historical and technical standpoint, where the kilns were found and what dates, and the historical literature. The only book that has been published recently was by Miss Medley in London, and she's a potter. She's written it from a potter's standpoint. This is a departure. It's unique in the ceramic literature in the world because it's written by a potter instead of a historian.

The decorative things I always use and still use in my teaching to illustrate shape, outline, texture and color. For instance, when we do table settings, students have access to all the lovely things, which is an inspiration. But they have to go out and find contemporary things if they want color. They can't find these things in Chinatown anymore.

As you recall, after I started my own school at St. Anne Street, which was right near Chinatown, I made the acquaintance of Ching Wah Lee. I went to visit his studio to see a Chinese puppet show, and that's when I first met him. He was a collector, like this man we met in Peking, but he never collected Chinese prints. He collected mainly ceramics from the earliest neolithic times, 3000 or more B.C. and then on down to the later periods.

So I got interested for the first time in the historical aspects of Chinese art; I discovered that the study of Chinese ceramics was the most fascinating study, because you could follow the technical development of ceramics from earliest times right down to the present, earliest unglazed earthen pots to the elegant ware of the Sung dynasty, 10th and 11th centuries. Then I started to collect from a historical standpoint, but always with the added aesthetic of appreciation of form, and especially the elaboration of geometric forms so characteristic of the contemporary aesthetics of the present century.

Mitchell: How many pieces would you say are in your collection?

Schaeffer: I've never counted them, hundreds of them.

#### The Collection's Future

Mitchell: You are doing a catalogue?

Schaeffer: Yes, and Clarence Shangraw is helping to write up the items in his spare time. He was just here yesterday. He just finished up my blue and white collection, and then he's discovered I had



Schaeffer: some very early Peking glass. Now he's doing the monochromes, the single color ware.

Mitchell: Your collection is here now, but are you planning to put it in any particular museum?

Schaeffer: No, when I'm through with it and pass on, it will be put up for auction.

Mitchell: Well, then it's very important to do that catalogue?

Schaeffer: Yes. That's one of the things I'd like to finish.

Mitchell: Your collection has been on exhibit in the Asian Art Museum, hasn't it?

Schaeffer: Yes, an honor for my 90th birthday, in 1976, they showed sixty-some pieces of my things, and gave me a big reception. It was overwhelming. I never dreamed that I could be put up on a pedestal like that. [laughs] Over a thousand guests, former students and friends, came from far and near.



A man of many talents and interests, Rudolph Schaeffer has always shown a marked predilection for the arts of Asia, particularly those of the Far East: China, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia. The collection he has put together over the years is a brilliant reflection of this predilection. It also illustrates the very personal taste of a great connoisseur.

As a charter member of the Society for Asian Art, he was instrumental in bringing the Avery Brundage collection to San Francisco and has kept very close ties with the Asian Art Museum since its foundation. He currently serves on our Acquisitions, Loans and Exhibitions Committee where his experience is regarded by everyone as a major asset.

This exhibition of a selection of Rudolph's collection does not only mark the 90th birthday of a dear friend and colleague. It also celebrates the teacher of so many generations of young people whose eyes and sensibilities he has opened and attuned to the subtleties of the most refined civilizations this earth has ever known. For this alone we owe Rudolph an immense debt of gratitude and are happy to have this occasion to thank him in our modest way.

*J. d'Argençé*  
Director and Chief Curator

Most of us strive to satisfy our acquisitive nature. For a hobby we collect all sorts of things—paintings, first editions, shells, guns and even buttons.

As a teacher of visual art I have long felt a need to collect, not as a hobby but for visual aid in teaching my pupils to see. I constantly sought inspiring objects and with my great fascination for Chinese Art I found there a rich and abundant source.

Full appreciation of beauty in Art comes from the ability to see and not from learning historical data. Some fortunately are born with this ability to see, others have to cultivate it.

Looking is not seeing. Looking only involves the rational mind, seeing involves the heart as well.

In our main San Francisco public library there is engraved on travertine stone this splendid quote "Art is beauty passed through thought and fixed in Form." One can hardly improve on that. Though to bring it into context I might say 'passed through thought' and heart.

Intelligent aesthetic appreciation begins with visual awareness of Form—the awareness of color, texture, line and outline, following in their relationship to Form.

In Chinese ceramics we find countless inspiring forms—finely proportioned, simple, subtle in outline, beautiful in color, and added to these aesthetic qualities is an unparalleled excellence of craftsmanship.

These are the first qualities of beauty that feed the seeing eye. The historical, the provenance, the extrinsic value are of importance but secondary.

In Chinese Art I often find expressed a certain contemplative quality of beauty which defies verbal expression. It is, I believe, a feeling engendered by the awareness of beauty.

Thus through the aesthetic consciousness is the East brought closer to the heart of the West.

From my classroom notes.

*Rudolph Schaeffer*

Selections from the Rudolph Schaeffer Collection of Oriental Art  
June 28 through August 1, 1976  
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco  
The Avery Brundage Collection

The Brundage Collection

Mitchell: What is your connection with the Brundage collection, with the Asian Museum?

Schaeffer: For several years now I've been on the acquisition and exhibition committee of the Asian Art Museum. There's a feeling of comradeship among collectors of various types of things. Like if somebody else collects ceramics, they want to know, "What, Rudolph, what did you collect? What's the latest thing you've got?" [laughs]

Mitchell: But didn't you go to Kansas City once?

Schaeffer: I've been to the Nelson Gallery several times and, of course, I'm very happy to have Laurence Sickman as a friend. (He's going to write the introduction to my catalogue.) I visited museums, especially ones that had the oriental collections.

Mitchell: But weren't you indirectly involved in getting the Brundage collection here?

Schaeffer: Well, I helped. When I got interested in Ching Wah's collection, and started to collect, then I had him give series of lectures, for fifteen years; from those early days in the 1940s, through the 1960s, right over those years, he gave these lectures mainly on Chinese ceramics, but also on enameling and crafts and paintings, too. And I gave lectures on Chinese prints, and demonstrations.

Outside of Berkeley, Stanford and Mills I don't think there was much going on in Oriental art at this time. There was very little going on here in San Francisco, although Catherine Ball, who was an early director of art in San Francisco public schools, was a great Orientalist in her own right. She collected and she wrote that monumental reference book on decorative symbols of Oriental art. I have a copy I can show you. Also she autographed it and wrote a touching tribute to me, too.

In those early days, anybody who had any interest flocked together. So consequently, all the people, like Mrs. Stern, and so many who are the pillars of the Asian Art Society today, they came to Ching Wah's classes at the Schaeffer School. That's how some got interested and some started to collect. And Mrs. Kent, all those ladies, everyone who was interested in Oriental art came to Ching Wah's stimulating lectures, over the years, some time or other.



Schaeffer: Those were the people who organized the Asian Art Society, before the Brundage collection was here. We had meetings in different houses, and sometimes met here. I'd put on a show, and I think one time Cahill over in Berkeley gave a talk to the society. So then when the Brundage collection was being publicized, and Pittsburg was after it and Chicago was after it, we rooted like everything to get that collection.

I loaned some of my things for television, and Joe Brotherton, who lives up on Telegraph Hill, gave television talks and used some of my neolithic things in his talks. We all worked toward it.

I feel that Ching Wah's many lectures perhaps were the most inspirational, of any activities here, and most responsible for the growing interest in Oriental art. But on account of his unpopular Caucasian wife, he didn't have the place in the affections of the Oriental art community here that he deserved. That's a hurt, or a disease of our culture, that people always are so personal about things. They don't look to the real universal value of an individual. They look at little personal flaws. I find it true right in my own organization. You have to look beyond little personal differences.

#### Mexico and Central America

Mitchell: When you went on your other travels, to Mexico, now how did that come about?

Schaeffer: The first trip to Mexico I took with a friend, Tom LaFargue. It was in the summer of '48. We were still down at Chinatown and I don't know how I happened to contact him, but he came to the school and he was interested in Oriental art. He was a Yale graduate, and what he wanted to do was to go to Mexico and investigate the influence of Chinese art on the early Mexican art, Mayan art, if there was any influence. I had made arrangements with an agent from the American Express. For some tourist reason, they wanted me to give a course down at Cuernavaca in color and design. Well, we had that in mind. I was going to give a course and he wanted to do some research, so we planned to go.

The course fell through; they didn't get enough people to register. So we went anyway. We borrowed a car, which practically was wrecked by the time we got back. We had to refurbish that



Schaeffer: car. It cost me a pretty penny to get the car all put back into shape. Starting from here, we were ten weeks before we got back here again. We drove all over Mexico, excepting we didn't go to the west side. We went to the east side, to Vera Cruz, and down to the southern border, and visited that wonderful old temple at Mitla. I bought a native weaving from there.

Mitchell: Did you find yourself incorporating some of the color harmonies of Mexican culture?

Schaeffer: Oh, it was wonderful, to see houses painted those beautiful earth colors. They were beautiful lavenders and pinks, mustard yellow, turquoise. Then all of a sudden a Coca Cola ad would burst in sight with that horrible red and green, and then that violent blue of the Pepsi Cola!

All the Mexican colors were so beautifully toned with a kind of natural harmony. Sometimes they painted one color over another and when the top layer peeled off, it made a wonderful color composition.

Mitchell: Did you collect Mexican sculpture?

Schaeffer: Oh yes, I did that summer, and pottery too. Oh yes, I have a lot of Mayan things. We'd go around the countryside and they'd dig them out of little places. The natives had them hidden in the crevices in their adobe huts. Oftentimes they'd dig them up in their barnyard. They'd treasure them, they wouldn't let anybody know they had them, otherwise they would be hounded with tourists. But we were always nice and friendly, so we always got something from them. Often we stopped at freshly cultivated cornfields and searched along on our hands and knees for small bits of Mayan sculpture.

Mitchell: When you came back, were there any specific ideas that the Mexican trip inspired for your school or for teaching?

Schaeffer: I got some interesting utensils and a lot of shards. Then we went to the museum in a town outside of Mexico City.

Mitchell: You mean the pyramids?

Schaeffer: No, it's a town, Puebla, yes. There's a museum there. We looked at the Chinese things. That's what he was interested in. There were Chinese costumes and things gathered from shipwreck. In various stores I found some Chinese ceramics. I have a piece in my collection now, of Kung Chi blue and white.

Mitchell: What other traveling did you do?

Schaeffer: It was all so new and all, and we drove everywhere. Tom got sick, like most people do, but I took some kind of preventive medicine. I was able to drive most of the time. We took turns driving.

Mitchell: What other kinds of experiences like that have you had that have been inspiring or exciting?

Schaeffer: I went back again to Mexico, a couple of times. During the Telegraph Hill period I went also to Guatemala, and El Salvador. I have a friend in San Salvador, the city. He's moved away now. I visited them one Christmastime. Oh, they really entertained me. They put on a big party, and I went to the market and got all kinds of artificial flowers and things and I made a big table decoration, and they had a band. There were lots of parties and dinners for their American visitor. [laughs] Then I went up to Guatemala and visited there on the way home.

Those countries are in great upheaval and great unrest right now. But it was very peaceful at that time. My friend had a furniture factory. I met this little Mexican youngster about twelve years old. He was making models of furniture at the factory. He was very talented and creative--I wonder what became of that charming little boy, he seemed to have a great deal of talent. (I never thought of that kid from that day to this moment. I am glad to have this opportunity for remembering.)

### Healing Attitudes

Schaeffer: Well, my later travels have been three times to Europe, to England. I also visited friends in Basel and Zurich and also visited Paris.

Mitchell: When did you go there? What years?

Schaeffer: In the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Mitchell: What kind of trip was that?

Schaeffer: My first trip was to a spiritual healer. I was very lame; I had trouble with my knee, and my back, terrible. I had awful arthritis in my back. I still have some. I went to Alsbury, an hour's ride out of London, to see this Dr. Chapman. (There

Schaeffer: is a book written about him called Healing Hands.) I thought I'd go and see him.

Not everybody would be interested in this. I don't know whether I should put this in. [laughs] He'd go in a trance like many healers do. This has been known in Tibetan culture for centuries but it isn't accepted by the Christian world, you see. But personalities can take over another personality. Of course the Christian Bible is full of demons being cast out. It's happening today, right in our midst too.

Mitchell: But tell me about what kind of healing process he gave to you.

Schaeffer: I laid face down on the table. I couldn't see what he was doing. I could hear kind of clicks, and this man who was working on me was in the person of George Chapman. He was in daily life a fireman in the town, but the spirit took over Dr. Chapman's body, in trance.

Mitchell: He was a doctor or a healer?

Schaeffer: He called himself a healer, a psychic Christian healer. For years he was a fireman, but when anybody was sick he would go to heal them in these little communities. From when he was a young man, he had the gift of laying on of hands. See, that's Christian, in the Bible tradition of laying on of hands, healing, and of course Christ was the Master Healer. And Mary Baker Eddy claims to have discovered the source of Christian healing.

Mitchell: Did you go take your back problems to him? It was a back problem that you took?

Schaeffer: Yes, and knee, and a hip problem. I limped, I could hardly walk. In trance, Mr. Chapman's mind was taken over by the spirit of a Dr. Lang who lived in England over one hundred years ago, and incidentally was a great friend of William Morris. Mr. Chapman showed me things of William Morris's in his office that he acquired from Dr. Lang's family.

Mitchell: So you were in your late seventies?

Schaeffer: Yes, it was not so long ago.

Mitchell: Did you have any conflict between what the man in England told you and what you were told here?

Schaeffer: Oh no, however endless books are written on arthritis, mainly telling you to watch your diet, you see, watch your diet. No sugar, little meat, no smoking or alcohol, and exercise. That's

Schaeffer: my trouble right now. I should have more exercise. Here I sit in this comfortable seat.

Most of all I think is your attitude of mind. You have to have an affirmative attitude. "I am that! Thou art and there is none beside Thee and I know no other presence, omnipotent and omniscient. I am Thine only and in Thee I live, move and have my being. I am Thine own substance, power, and light, and I shed abroad wisdom, strength, strength and wholeness, from Thee. Thou art now working through me to will and to do that which ought to be done by me. I am forgiven and governed by Thee alone. Thou art, and there is none beside Thee."

And who is Thee? That's divine godself, yourself. You have to make those powerful statements, to eliminate the belief in the supremacy of the illness. That's just in the shell, and the spiritual supermind governs the shell. The big thing in life is to elevate your consciousness and to move from that consciousness of aches and pains into a higher consciousness, to the infinite cosmic consciousness. How hard it is to do! You can make all these statements and everything, but the next thing is, by golly, you have to practice it, or you fall by the wayside, get out of habit. That Divine Presence is a state of mind. It has to be cultivated, has to be concentrated on, it has to be centered. That's a part of the centering and meditation.

I have an image I will use in my talk to the graduates. I'm liking our mind to a lake, that is ruffled by the wind, and all the reflections from the shore, and trees and the hills are all in a state of agitation, and distortion. That's the way our world is, mostly today, all in a state of agitation, fragmented and distorted. But if we can get ourselves quiet, through contemplation or meditation, we can quiet that wind, because there's nothing affected down below, in the heart of things, in the heart of the lake. That's as peaceful and quiet as ever, but it's just on the surface.

Now if you can get yourself quiet, then all the surrounding shore is reflected perfectly, perfect image in the lake. That's what you have to use in your imagination, hold the perfect image of the affairs of your world, no matter what the distortion is. When you look at that person, that is doing you dirt, don't condemn him. See him perfect, as he or she ought to be and is in reality. That's the most difficult thing, but the most potent thing in life that you can do. This too is healing.



INTERVIEW 9: May 21, 1981

Ego and Experience

Schaeffer: While it is in my mind, you were speaking about the students and a lack of appreciation. This is a psychological fact, I think, with teachers and students. A teacher has a good student and pours into that student all they have, and they profit by it. They may be very talented too. But you know, really, when you're teaching, really a good teacher, and I profess to be a good teacher. It is not so much what I give to the student but it's what I awaken in the student. Those are the students that are the most effective and have the greatest potential, the ones that have some talent, and you awaken that talent, you develop that talent, you see? And when they come out into the world of activity and their profession, they realize their own potential. They've always had that, but they're more or less neglectful and loathe to give a teacher the credit. It's the student that doesn't perform so much, doesn't have the talent to begin with, that is sometimes my best supporter.

Mitchell: That corresponds to the relationship of the alumni in a college. The students who don't finish and graduate quite often recognize what they've missed. They understood what little they got, more vividly than the students who have full use of the place and graduate.

And that's quite consistent in alumni groups that you have ardent supporters among those who had more troubles in a sense while they were there, or less ability to make use of the place, and who then realize so firmly what it was that was there. Maybe that's the parallel for you.

Schaeffer: And then, too, the very talented individual also has a very strong ego, and self-appraisal. That type of individual has difficulty in sharing things. When I was younger, because I

Schaeffer: had some talent, I had to grow into a more magnanimous attitude toward my fellow people, fellow workers, and learn to share. I think that that's something that life has to teach you, is to share.

Mitchell: During your early career, when you were at the Mark Hopkins School, which turned into the California School of Fine Arts, you were probably a maverick to those people.

Schaeffer: I think so, in a measure, the old conventional people. There were a number of teachers there, I don't think I need to mention their names, but they were the old-dyed-in-the-wool, you know, and they were all for following the old traditions of teaching. An example is that they came to a point where they didn't understand what Bufano was doing in sculpture and what I was doing in color.

They couldn't understand why so many students, so many of the young artists and advertising men, interior designers, all these people, why they flocked to my class. I would have seventy-five in my class, where the portrait class and landscape class would be about twelve or fifteen, and they were trying to build up those classes, and some of the teachers were a little jealous of what my classes were bringing in. Then when the board of trustees was reviewing the budget, they said those classes bring in tuition, you better keep Schaeffer. So luckily I was hired year after year.

My classes were big, but Bufano's weren't. What he had to teach wasn't so popular, didn't catch fire, like mine, so he was let go, unfortunately. There was a crying need for color, a need for composition and abstract design. The abstract art was just beginning to catch on, and so my classes were very well attended and that's why I guess I was kept on. Your question again?

Mitchell: About the fact that some of your students feel that you're not sufficiently appreciated publicly, that you get many personal letters of appreciation and acknowledgement from students on a personal level, but your contribution is not recognized.

Schaeffer: All the fan mail is mainly from people whose lives were affected by what they got from me, more than from the professional people. They're very nice, and all, and they came to visit me, but as you say, they are reticent in their praise.

Mitchell: Dorr Bothwell was one of your most appreciative students.

Schaeffer: Oh, most appreciative and she made a name for herself in the art world, too.

She studied with me in the early twenties at the California School of Fine Arts. The work, if one would call it work, we did together, was when I had the summer school in the summer of 1925 on Powell Street.

### The Business of Running a School

Schaeffer: She said that I had no business sense. I just stuffed the tuition for those students into the drawer, not making any record or anything. I don't remember that, but I do realize that later years I became a very good businessman.

I never made any money out of the school, but if you interview Harry Nail, one of my friends today, he says I'm a very good businessman.

I worked through many financial crises, and I don't mean to just brag about it but today I have no debts. I don't think the school would have any debts if I could manage it. When I used to have the lectures and exhibitions, I'd charge admission, and today we don't charge anything. Also I had the East West Gallery, and they paid for a membership dues in that, and et cetera and et cetera.

Mitchell: Of course, so that you kept things coming in.

Schaeffer: I had to do that to keep the school afloat.

Then we came to a point in the late 1940s when they tore down the first building, you see? Then I had to think, how can I recover? That was such a great loss. I put all that money in the St. Anne Street school, and it went down the drain. How was I going to recover? Well, it took about five years to struggle along, and I didn't know just how we were ever going to survive, and we sold all the equipment that we could get together from the St. Anne School.

I had loyal, supportive teachers. Mrs. Clara Vestal and Al Dahn taught for practically nothing. I didn't draw a cent of salary during those years. How I survived, I don't know, but we did.

- Schaeffer: But that taught me to be very conserving, and so circumstances forced me to incorporate as a nonprofit institution, which sometimes I regret, but it was under great pressure. The one advantage we have is we don't have to pay taxes. I had to incorporate in order to get tax-free donations, but strangely enough it never really worked successfully as far as finances were concerned, with one exception: Mr. Bechtel of the Bechtel Corporation gave this property to the school. Imagine, that was only \$12,000! That's what this property cost, at that time. But it was all run down and vandalized, and over the years I've put in thousands of dollars of improvements. The garden room twelve years ago or more, cost \$23,000, and this addition now to this cottage is over \$50,000. I've had to raise that. But that goes into the school, that doesn't even go to me or my heirs, see? Part of it, of course, was raised selling things from my collection that I donated to the school. Well, I don't know how I got on that. I don't think that helps very much.
- Mitchell: I think it's very interesting to know how things happened over the years, on every level, both aesthetic and technical.
- Schaeffer: When we moved to Union Street, I and the school were solvent. Ever since we've been here, we've been in debt.
- Mitchell: Well, part of that might be that you're not as able to get out and give those lectures, for money, as you were during the period when you were on Union Street.
- Schaeffer: Oh, I used to do so much on the outside that it was great advertising. I'd give a lecture to the PTA and many of the San Francisco women's clubs, and the next year these parents would be sending their boys and girls to the school.
- Mitchell: I think it was Dorr Bothwell who said, though, that if you had lived in New York and had been developing these ideas in New York, during that period, there would have been a wider audience.
- Schaeffer: Yes, yes, because there was so little appreciation out here, so little appreciation and still is.
- Mitchell: Culturally the San Francisco Bay Area is not a trend setter particularly, or is it?
- Schaeffer: Raymond Duncan, I told you what he said when I visited him and we had lots of talk. He said, "Why do you stay out there in San Francisco? Why don't you come to Paris with your school? The world passes through Paris. Your school would be famous overnight," he said. And I said, "I like the cow pasture." [laughs]



Schaeffer: It's true that there's so little appreciation. Today, now, we have some wonderful work on display--those screen prints down in our annex--by 2nd and 3rd year students under Wayne Davies, a former graduate. They are beautiful textiles, and lovely work, yet we had hardly any visitors, excepting the first night with mostly old friends and students. When it comes to the people who are going to hire these people, the architects, the interior designers, there was an absence.

Mitchell: To what do you attribute that?

Schaeffer: Lack of publicity, perhaps.

Mitchell: I think also that we are dependent today on a kind of communication which is more mechanical.

#### Preparing for the Job Market

Schaeffer: And then, too, over the years I've emphasized the aesthetics. We would always have enough practical, technical training to go with it, but the demand today is more on the technical training, and aesthetics it seems, is left to take care of itself. However, our students must always, in the jobs, have the edge on the people they work with because they know color.

Just the other day I was talking to one of the students that graduated last year, and she never was terribly good in her technical work, but she got this job because she knew color. They put her into an important position. She was able to handle color understandingly, where the rest of the staff didn't know anything about color. I was very happy about that.

Mitchell: So the aesthetic really integrates the other information.

Schaeffer: Yes, indeed. As I say, they can always acquire and build their technical knowledge, but nobody is going to teach them anything about aesthetics.

Mitchell: Over the years, what fields have your students gone in, and what kind of work have they done?

Schaeffer: Lately, we've put an emphasis on interior and advertised the interior courses. But earlier the emphasis was on design in general. Universal principles of design and color, and so many students went into so many different kinds of things--advertising, packaging, textiles, interior, flower arrangement. (They became florists, too.) Wherever design and color were needed.

Schaeffer: One of our students did all of the drawings for that famous company that advertises pearls; she did all their drawings and for years she was their top artist. Another was the chap that went into Syracuse ceramics and was their head designer. So they went into various fields and were successful, but lately they've been narrowing down to interior.

### Photography

Mitchell: Perhaps it might be interesting to look into developing more photography, developing more design related to photography, because there's so much interest in photography. I discovered that I teach more and more design, with students of photography, and they have to know about color as much as any artist.

Schaeffer: I guess that's why our Neil Parker, who's been teaching photography, has been elected head of some photographic thing, because he brings in the importance of design.

Mitchell: I think it's common to bring that around more into the design and photography together, because an awful lot of students in photography know nothing about design or color.

Schaeffer: They don't know anything about color values. Well, that was illustrated very keenly early. Way back in the forties. One of the best photographers studied design and color with me here in San Francisco, Truman Bailey. He went to Lima, Peru, to revive the ancient crafts for commercial purposes. He died there. He often told me the strength and success of his photography was because of his work in design with me, because of his appreciation of texture, dark-light, form, composition.

Harry Donlevy and I were talking the other day about next fall, and we don't want to put an emphasis upon interior. We don't want to put an emphasis on the various departments. We want to put an emphasis on color, color in interior, color in flower arrangement, color in textiles, color in photography, design and color in photography.

Mitchell: You could be bringing together the machine art of photography, which is the art of our century, and marrying it with your design concepts that have been always part of the art-in-everyday-life concept. Photography has been one of the means of the century and, I think, the right new light for your concepts to new students today. I think it's a great idea, Rudolph.

Garden Arrangements and Flower Arrangements

Mitchell: We talked a little bit about establishing the school here, getting set up, but we really didn't go into the last ten years or so.

Schaeffer: Transforming that old building into an attractive place for a school, I think I've described that. Then I laid out the garden, which people say is a little bit Chinese, sometimes Japanese, but I say also it's a little bit Schaeffer. [laughs] I laid out the garden so it was in different sections, like an architect would plan a dwelling. One room connected with another area, a flow, which interior designers call traffic lanes. Always you move naturally from one area into the other. There are really five areas in this garden, distinct areas, but they all integrate one with another organically.

Mitchell: Speaking of gardens, Dorr Bothwell mentioned that to her knowledge, your combining of flowers and vegetables in the same garden, in one of your original gardens, was absolutely unknown around here at all. It was an original idea.

Schaeffer: Well, in arrangement it is, I think she meant in arrangement. Not in planting, but in arrangements. That was something new, vegetables and flowers, and plant material. I have lots of photographs of that kind of thing that have never been published. Oh yes, some have been, I showed you that magazine, and that was earlier. Over the years, most every other year, I've given demonstrations on the arrangements of fruit and vegetables and flowers. I called it "The Romance of the Vegetable Stand." That has been part of the teaching here.

One of the big things we did about twelve years ago was I designed this garden room for teaching flower arrangement. I had in mind then making it a center for flower arrangement in San Francisco, because I've seen in these later years the detrimental--if this was ever published, I guess I would raise some controversy--but I've seen the detrimental influence of the International Ikebana Society.

Mitchell: What does that mean?

Schaeffer: The Ikebana Society is a society formed by that Ikebana School in Tokyo. It claims to be very creative but they teach nothing about creative universal principles. They make arrangements with certain rules, which have nothing to do with creative principles. The result is bad design, and utterly pretentious.

Schaeffer: There's one fine thing that I learned from the Japanese traditional flower arrangement, and that is this: in combining plant material, one must have contrast, contrast of character, of flowers, leaves, et cetera. At the same time there must be an element of harmony, of growth, of color, or it may be in texture, or may be in the form of the flowers or something, but there's always that interplay of contrast and harmony, that balance of contrast and harmony. That's what I've learned from the Japanese flower arrangement, more than the arrangement itself.

They always seem to have had access to private gardens where they had a variety of materials to work with, and not have to depend on more or less stereotyped commercially grown materials. On the flower market, everything is standardized; the stems are all the same length, and you can't buy certain things that are beautiful just for texture, like Queen Anne's lace, or something like that, a weed, or something that belongs to the category of weeds. Weeds often are wonderful for arrangements of contrasting materials, and the Japanese were able to incorporate them beautifully.

But in these International Ikebana shows in San Francisco that I've seen recently, the arrangements are so ostentatious, trying conscientiously to make an effect. The flower arrangements we've developed here at the school, the Schaeffer School of Flower Arrangement, always keeps the natural appearance so that it might look as though with your imagination you took a shovel and picked up a little piece of your garden and brought it inside. Not exactly--Your imagination has to play on it, in the same way that the Chinese painter painted a landscape. He never painted the landscape realistically, but at the same time when he was finished with his painting you might think, "That must exist out there in nature." He had a way of interpreting nature and eliminating the undesirable element: if there was a tree fallen across a river, or lake, that interfered with the composition, the painter left that out of his composition. A Western artist usually feels he or she has to portray everything religiously, just as it is.

Mitchell: This room that you built, which is a beautiful room, with the skylights and the light coming in, you'd hoped that it would have more influence as a center?

Schaeffer: Yes. I sent for one of my former students living in New York. He'd been wanting to come to San Francisco, and I put him in charge of that. We wanted to really make a thing of it, but it didn't work, so I took over and taught flower arrangement the following years until I trained this young Chinese, Juk San, who



Schaeffer: is a graduate of the school. Up until a year ago, he taught flower arrangement, and being very talented, he was carrying on this idea that I had started with. He was also a good student of Chinese painting and he saw what they did in Chinese painting by idealizing the landscape. He had a natural look by idealizing it. He promised to be my best exponent in flower arrangement. Last year he left, planning to visit Japan and China, I hope just temporarily.

Mitchell: Your ability to keep the school and its concepts moving forcefully forward has been difficult?

Schaeffer: Yes, very difficult. I feel in this last five years I haven't been too successful. I made an ill choice of help, I think. I was often desperate for additional help. Now, I have quite a spurt of new inspiration, and I think we can well improve things and iron out some of our difficulties.

I like what you said about emphasizing the photography. I was a little bit shaky on that score because we have no equipment. Toward the end of this term, Neil Parker called me in several times to show me what the students have done in photography, and in composition. We throw these on the screen in color. They're of flowers, and different objects, and then I would say, "Well, cut it at the top, cut at the left," or "Expand the left," or "Cut the right," until you've got a balanced composition. He was able to do that on the screen, so that the students saw in their pictures that the contrast was everywhere, all over the place, that they had no center of interest, or focus. It was a very good lesson in abstract composition.

Mitchell: And it's a method of learning which is very effective to students today, because they are interested in photography.

Schaeffer: Then they can go back and cut that slide, by themselves, and correct it. That's what they should do. I don't know whether they did that or not. I have to check with Neil. So often after a criticism the student doesn't go back and correct which he or she should.

### Art in Everyday Life

Mitchell: What is your recipe for how to live your art in everyday life, Rudolph?

Schaeffer: One thing, oftentimes when I'm doing something I get things in great disorder, and here I have a school of design, and one definition of design is the art of order. I have tried to

Schaeffer: discipline myself to live and work in an orderly surrounding and be steadfast in that. I've been successful up to a certain point. Sometimes that point is the closet door, and if you open that, a multiplicity of things will fall in your face!

Mitchell: Speaking of the concepts that have helped you to realize the aesthetic, one would be to have enough closets for all the clutter, or for your collections.

Schaeffer: We all accumulate things. It's part of our acquisitive nature. We accumulate things and collect things, too. And I think for interiors, ideally speaking--the ideally speaking gets side-tracked to the corner--but there should be plenty of storage space in a dwelling, so that you didn't have to have out everything that you collected.

Oh, I have friends who have been all over the world, they've collected so many different kinds of things, and they're sitting around on tables, on the tops of bookcases, the place is just an utter clutter of beautiful things. That's a tendency we have. That's why here I built a storage vault 7x7x40 long, you see. Then I can put things away and bring things out.

When things are displayed in a house--decorative things and useful things--they should always consider the space in which they exist, like there's a candlestick, there's a ceramic fruit, and a little vase with a flower in it, that's all there is on that table. [pointing to the table] And it's grouped there with thought. There's the tallest thing, there's the lowest thing, and there's something in between. And it all fits together in a composition on a little disk of glass.

Up here [pointing to the wall and bookcases] there's a plant and there's a figurine. Down below there's a lamp that leads into the Tobey print on the wall, and that's going to the left. And now to the right and you have a series of prints, but in the center, in relation to the center print, is a couple of birds sitting there in a composition. And you lead on over there to a pagoda with a little figurine in front of it and then you lead from there into that little square, and so on, but no clutter.

Mitchell: I respond to that very positively.

Schaeffer: Of course you do. But that is one of the things that has to be taught to the student, to the design student. First of all, some of them have to be taught the awareness of seeing one

Schaeffer: thing related to another, and in arranging, and composing, and having a mental analysis: does it harmonize? Does it lead? Or doesn't it; is it too abrupt? Too much contrast?

The eye must move easily from one thing to another. This is what I call visual kinetics. You go along in an automobile, and the driver has to have his eye on the road, of course, but you're sitting beside the driver watching the landscape. You have one impression after the other, all more or less unrelated impressions of form, color, et cetera, as you go along. Now it's the opposite of that when you come to the interior or garden or whatever, where those impressions have to be related, and if there's some unrelated thing you have to remove it. It's a matter of relating one thing to another.

That's why Keyserling, a European philosopher, made this statement: "The truth of this world is not in the things which are many, but in the relationships of the many in the one," meaning that when things are related they become one. So you have that sense of oneness stepping along from one thing to another.

Mitchell: Because they're in harmony, in a balance.

Schaeffer: Continuity, which is one of the great principles of the universe, continuity. That's another thing, all these principles that are taught in the Schaeffer school are really cosmic principles, they're not something made up by some individual.

Mitchell: One of the elements of your strength as a teacher is that you are speaking to the spirit in the person. Many of your principles are being used in psychotherapy, healing, religious groups. Most art schools emphasize the technical in art, and reject the spiritual.

Schaeffer: Yes, and that's the way our society is functioning, mainly.

Mitchell: And even when they talk about art, in those schools, they talk about it competitively, not individually, so it seems to me that one of the strengths of your teaching is that you have a great power as a spiritual teacher, which has to be united in peoples' minds with what they're getting in art.

Schaeffer: Well, the emphasis you see in design, the way we teach it, is an emphasis on harmony, upon unity, on balance. I try to impress it on our students that if they're going to express that out there in the visual world, where are they going to express it from if they don't have it within themselves? If there's no harmony within themselves, then it's something that they're dealing with only intellectually, with an absence of feelings.

Schaeffer: These things have to be gone over and over in order to get them across to the student. That's why we have a moment of meditation in the morning before we start our class, so as to remind them that that's important. They can't accomplish much in just a minute of meditation, but we do get centered and get disconnected from driving on the freeway and trying to get here on time and all of that, which is part of the daily routine, but must be balanced by getting quiet and centering and plunging into the depth of your being for a few moments. All these little squibbles and squabbles and things, they're nothing, forget it.

Don't harbor any of those animosities in your heart. Then there's no room for creativity. Creativity is based on love, intuition, peace, quiet, tenderness. Otherwise there's no chance of beauty. Art must project something, it must make you draw in a breath with ecstasy. To create that way takes practice. And it takes inspiration, also. You have to look to great works of mankind in art, and literature, read inspiring things, read the autobiographies of those who have done things, and have accomplished things. How did they do it? Read something of the wisdom of the sages of all countries, the sages of India, the sages of our Western world.

Mitchell: In this interview we also have talked about the great teachers that have influenced you, and it's wonderful to think, Rudolph, that you see yourself as part of a continuity.

Schaeffer: Oh yes, even in the outer expression, for instance, I felt myself, of course a very minor part, but still a very important part to me, because it was me, you see? There's nothing more important than me. [laughs] I think that's healthy, because if you don't think yourself important, who's going to think you're going to be important? Never say anything really detrimental about yourself because most everybody is just waiting to say something detrimental about you! Oftentimes behind your back. [laughs] So you have to have a good opinion of yourself, and care about yourself, but at the same time you can't be egotistical about it.

You have to be generous. You have to think about your fellow man, you see? There are two in the field, yourself and your brother, and the good you do for yourself you must also do for the other. High school students come to me and say, well, what should I do? What kind of a career shall I follow? I say follow what your heart says. But whatever you follow as a career must also be a benefit to your fellow men as well as to yourself. You have to have a career that shares. But it was easy for me because I wanted to be a teacher, see? It was easy, just easy.

Mitchell: It was natural?



Schaeffer: I always felt natural in the classroom, and always I've felt natural when I'm doing something outside of school. Doing a stage set or an interior, a flower arrangement, or something, it was just a natural, satisfying thing.

### Taking Care of Yourself

Mitchell: What about your physical health, your surmounting of physical problems?

Schaeffer: That's another thing. I neglected myself by overworking, overtaxing and going beyond my stride, getting too enthusiastic. But I had a very, a very good, healthy constitution, lots of energy. It wasn't until about my middle age that I was plagued with arthritis, and a bad back. Well now, let's see, I don't want to give the impression of being self-righteous here, but I do feel one has to take care of your body.

You have to be careful, be reasonably careful, about food and drink. Of course I thought it was very smart when I was young to smoke a cigar, but I never liked it. Then I would get a package of cigarettes, because I thought that was the thing to do, and then maybe I'd go to some dinner where a lot of people were smoking. I'd light a cigarette, perhaps because I was bored. I got caught into that, but I never really liked it, so I never made a habit of smoking. I have no recollection of ever getting inebriated [laughs], although one time I had a strong zombie at Trader Vic's and it almost put me under the table. [laughter] So I've been reasonably careful of what I eat and drink (no coffee these later years).

I think I was always somewhat religious-minded. In the first place, as a child and as a teenager, I was brought up in the Lutheran church. Then when I was about eighteen and graduated I was beginning to question and I leaned toward unorthodox religion. If I'm asked today what religion I am, I say I'm a universalist, whatever that means to anybody, but it means something to me, because I believe the universal truth is known by many different names. This idea of right and positive thinking entered into my philosophy very early, I was attracted toward what was called then the "new thought" movement. (Who was the exponent of that from England?) Then I paid attention also to Christian Science, and then I joined a group called the Home of Truth where we had meetings on Sunday mornings and meditation on Friday evenings.

Mitchell: And then you were open to the Eastern philosophies?

Schaeffer: Yes. I have been open to that Eastern philosophy, which I found was very sympathetic and easily correlated with the Christian--with Christ's specific teaching more than the orthodox Christian religions.

Mitchell: Again you're following your concept of the great teacher as opposed to the powerful institution.

Schaeffer: Exactly. There's been a lot of influences. It's easier to teach, sometimes, and to talk about things, than it is to practice. I have to confess to myself that I'm oftentimes a poor practitioner of my ideals.

Mitchell: But in the realm of taking care of yourself, and pulling yourself back to center, after all here you are, ninety-four!

Schaeffer: Yes, something has proved effective despite myself. [laughter] But another thing, I know people who must be much stronger in this than I am, but I realize, and know for certain, that there's a supreme consciousness that pervades all universes. Everything, all life in our universe, is the living expression of that consciousness, and it's so infinite, so vast, that it's there and here. Some call it God, some call it Divine Mind, some call it Allah, some call it the Tao, and some call it Buddha or Nirvana. There's all kinds of names, but it's omnipresent.

The important point in life is to try to spend some of our time contacting that presence. You find out what life is about. You know it is a consciousness expressing itself in love and perfection. We, each and every living creature, are part of that. Just like the leaf on that plant has the same essence as all the other leaves, and draws its life from a central root, and the central root draws its life from the center of all life.

I don't know how to express it but one must make that contact, in some way or other. And the contact is through your own consciousness. And through your imagination. You have to trust your imagination and it will become real. It's right here, now. But you have to be very still, and you have to shut out the world, you have to shut out--it would be a good thing if you could put ear plugs in your ears and not hear anything, not see anything, not sense any outer thing, but just that silence, that quiet that pervades everything. That's it! Draw from that, breathe it in.

Schaeffer: There is one exercise that I'll teach to you--stand with arms out, this hand up and this one down, and put your feet as far apart as you can. [laughs] Put your feet as far apart as you can, make yourself into a star, then get yourself very quiet and if your arms get tired let them go down slowly and put them back 'up again. You want to stand facing the East or the West so that you're drawing on the cosmic vibration. These fingers, pretty soon they begin to tingle and then here they disperse out this way, they pass all through your body, all through mind, body, and spirit and out the fingers out here, and you rejuvenate your whole system.

Mitchell: And that gets your mind and your body combining.

Schaeffer: Yes, that's the star exercise.

Mitchell: Where is that from, Rudolph?

Schaeffer: I read it in a book. [laughter] [And so ends the conversation, with the interviewer in "the star" stance, taking direction from her teacher, Rudolph Schaeffer.]

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## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX I

The following conversation took place on March 11th, 1980 at Rudolph Schaeffer's cottage on Potrero Hill in San Francisco. I arranged this reunion of Louise Dahl-Wolfe, at age eighty-three, with her most influential art teacher, Rudolph Schaeffer, age ninety-four. Louise was accompanied by her husband, Meyer Wolfe, also an artist. Louise was for over forty years a professional magazine photographer in New York, working mainly for Harper's Bazaar. She took a color and design class from Rudolph in 1917 at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco.

It was at this encounter that I first met Rudolph Schaeffer, a meeting which developed into a formal oral history project for the Regional Oral History Office of the University of California.

Schaeffer: We had a discussion in my class Monday about why so much of the contemporary art today just ignores aesthetic principles of unity and harmony and balance. I made this comment that I thought the whole world is fragmented, everything, government, everything, and so people have no concept of unity in their lives.

I said creative artists are bound to be affected that way. It reflects the mores and the temper of the times. To live in a fragmented period is part of our evolution, because all these century-old traditions, old molds are being broken up, smashed up, and it's painful. And the new molds have to be made new, we have to make new molds. We're making the molds for the new century. I tell my students in my emphasis on color, on the solar spectrum, that the sun is going to be the principal thing in the coming century. Solar energy, and solar color, which we've been teaching all these years.

Meyer Wolfe: When I first started painting color, they didn't teach color. John Sloan himself wasn't interested in color at all. He was interested in social aspects; he was a Socialist, you know. So then I studied color with a guy named Michael Jacobs, who wrote a book. But that's the first time; no one I ever knew that went to our school at the Art Institute in Chicago ever studied color.

Mitchell: When was that?

M. Wolfe: In 1916 or 1917, before the First World War. In 1918 I was working. I left the Art Institute and took a job for a year doing sketches, and it was just at the time before the Armistice. I can't remember his name but there was an older guy also working there, and he was in the painting class. He was very sophisticated; I was very naive. I remember we were helping that perfectly awful man whom we worked for. He'd come from either Munich or Vienna and he cut out terrible felt in different colors, parrots, and would put them on all the dotted Swiss curtains, and the women just adored it, and he made a big, a terrific lot of business. His name was Ed Martin--terrible, terrible!

Schaeffer: Martin passed away some years ago. They came out from Germany in 1915 with the German shows and expeditions. See, I came to San Francisco in 1915.

Mitchell: Where did you come from?

Schaeffer: I'd been teaching in Pasadena. I was trained as a craftsman, arts and crafts. I wasn't trained as an artist painter, I was trained in manual training and I had art training too. I went



Schaeffer: to the Normal Training School, which was a school for teachers in Detroit, in 1907. I taught two years in a country school in Michigan, then I went to Detroit to school, then I taught in Columbus, Ohio for three years. Then I came in 1910 out to the Throop Elementary School, which was then a preparatory school for Throop Institute, which is now Cal Tech. It's still in existence, but while I was there, it was quite different.

I had a different tack than the regular manual training teachers who were doing towel rollers and bread boxes and broom holders. I had them doing charming little boxes with copper hinges and with little birds' feet to close the lock. Then we got into doing twin beds, and all contemporary, you know.

It was the height of the arts and crafts movement, you see, when manual training was being put into the public schools for the first time. So the U.S. Commissioner of Education, by the name of Claxton, went around to scout all over the country and he came to California and they were looking for to pick out twenty-five manual arts teachers to travel to Germany, where they had just put in industrial design in the schools.

Of course, my things were spectacular because I designed all these things and the students helped me make them. In those days. I wouldn't do such things today; I wouldn't touch a student's work today, I'd just tell them what to do, but in those days I was green, you see, and the things were so outstanding.

In February or early March, we went. There was a government-chartered ship and we all went, twenty-five, and some of them had their wives along, and of course I... my wife was an absent quality, still is. So then, you see, I got caught in the war.

Mitchell: Were you about twenty-one years old?

Schaeffer: I was about twenty-eight and green as grass, oh my, but I was one of those fortunate people who had visual awareness. I saw everything: I still do today, everything. Everything. Nothing escapes me. I'm so grateful for that, so grateful for these eyes.

Mitchell: Where do you think that comes from:

Schaeffer: I don't know. You're born with it. Born with it. And then of course your environment might have something to do with it. But you see, I think I'm oriental in my philosophy; I'm sure I was around many times before. I get flashes from the other side, too.

Mitchell: In other words, you're an old soul.

Louise

Dahl-Wolfe: He's a very young soul, I think!

Schaeffer: But anyway when I was in Germany, I was having an awfully good time: I went to Vienna and contacted Joseph Hoffman, the great architect. He took me under his wing and showed me everything. Oh my, I was a green boy from California, from the wild and woolly West, you see.

Dahl-Wolfe: Then the war came on.

Mitchell: Where were you in 1915, Louise?

Dahl-Wolfe: I was at the art school. Rudolph was teaching interior decorating, which I was interested in, furniture and all, but the color was so boring. The color, everything that we lived with in San Francisco at the time, in houses, and you know, that was all that mission color--dark brown, and dirty forest green, and sort of rust color, all the dirty colors and that's why it was an explosion when Rudolph came along. He puts pink and red together, and my God, that was a thing you never did, put pink and red together.

Schaeffer: Pink and orange, too. Deep, deep, I'd get these pink geraniums and orange marigolds.

Dahl-Wolfe: Rudolph, I want to tell you one thing: I was studying before that, too, with Frank Van Sloun, so I didn't draw very well. I didn't seem to have the feeling for drawing but I was painting with the palette knife. On Sundays we would go out and then we'd bring our compositions in the middle of the week, so Frank Van Sloan would have all the classes. The boys and girls would come there from the life classes and you'd have the stuff up on the wall and he'd say, "Whose is this?" and you'd raise your hand. Everytime I raised my hand, he'd say, "Lovely color." (He always talked to me about color.)

Everything was painted with the palette knife, there were no shapes or anything, you know, with the palette knife, so one day I got kind of bored with painting with the palette knife, so I decided that I was going to make a composition. I made a composition at home and I put silver slippers in and all that and I was trying to really paint like an academist, and I thought this was the best thing I'd done, the very best thing! I put it up on the wall, and he said, "Whose is this?" and I raised my hand. He said, "This is the essence of superficiality."

Dahl-Wolfe: My God, it knocked me through the floor, and I thought, "Well, I guess I'm no good, so I might as well quit painting." I quit painting. Then it was just about the time when you came along and my sister knew about your course because she was an art teacher at Polytechnic High School, and her best friend was Shotwell Taylor. Did you remember?

But it's a funny thing, you went in for more brilliant color. And you taught hue, value, and intensity. I used to go down the street from art school after I got through class and I'd say that's such and such a hue; I'd go looking at all the --everything. The one I'm more thankful to than anything is Rudolph Schaeffer for what he taught me about color.

Mitchell: Louise kept telling me about color and about your teaching and the use of color on wood, and I wanted to meet you.

Schaeffer: And I'll tell you, my teaching in the school had a great deal to do with Dorothy Liebes, who really brought texture and color into the world of fabrics.

Dahl-Wolfe: She was a great friend of mine.

Schaeffer: And all of her helpers took the color course and the dyeing course at school.

Dahl-Wolfe: That's where Dorothy got it all.

Schaeffer: And I trained Mrs. Liebes to do the prismatic color and in dyeing and those wonderful Swiss dyes, and so that went all over the world.

Dahl-Wolfe: She married Leon Liebes, of Liebes and Company. It was one of the great stores in San Francisco. They lived up--opposite the art school at Mason and California. Leon Liebes had an apartment in that building; that's where Dorothy went as a bride. Then she had a studio on Powell Street up the hill. In 1938 I photographed her for the Bazaar and she had all these things, Rudolph, with every value and color you could imagine.

Schaeffer: She had a whole sequence of color. Later we'll go over to the school and I'll show you my cabinets where we start with black and white and then there's yellow and then there's green and right on through, and the final cabinet is natural colors, woods and so forth.

First of all, before I forget it, I want to tell Louise that I'm in Imogen Cunningham's book, After Ninety.

- Mitchell: I know that because that's where I recognized you because I did the introduction to that book.
- Schaeffer: You did? I'll have to dig it out and have you autograph it.
- Mitchell: And that's where I first heard your name. And then, of course, Louise talked about you so much over the times we've been together.
- Schaeffer: In fact it was just a few weeks before my ninetieth birthday, and it was her last portrait, the last thing that she did. That was the finale and, you see, that ninetieth birthday they gave me a big reception and party at the Museum of Asian Art, and Imogen was to be the master of ceremonies but she passed away a few weeks before that. In June it will be four years. Now, see, I'm pushing ninety-four.
- M. Wolfe: I'm pushing eighty.
- Dahl-Wolfe: Did you know our best friend in Carmel that we like the most--she's ninety-seven. Her name is Amelia Carter and she's a knockout. She was a great friend of Frances Perkins of the Roosevelt regime. She's the only one we can talk politics to; everybody else is so conservative you don't dare open your mouth. She's ninety-seven, and she's got definite ideas that are very interesting.
- Mitchell: While I've got the two of you together, though, I want to talk about the art school.
- Dahl-Wolfe: What I want to tell you, Rudolph, is that my sister's friend said to me one day, "How would you like to go over to"--I think it was Oakland--"How would you like to go over to meet Anne Brigman?"

So, when I got in this place with Shotwell, I took one look at that studio--and it was all red-violet background on the wood; it was the redwood or one of the woods that California houses are always made of inside--it was all painted red-violet, and I almost swooned, I was so thrilled. You know, Rudolph, I think Anne Brigman's a very neglected photographer.

We went to Monterey to spend the summer months from teaching. She was teaching with my sister at Polytechnic High and she said, "Let's do some Anne Brigmans," after we had seen these. So we had another girl friend who came too, and the youngest of us were made to pose nude. I have a snapshot taken on Carmel Beach with Bess and myself posing nude. Bess at that point



Dahl-Wolfe: thought she saw someone coming and she goes and plops down among the bullrushes and here I am like September morn, I'm standing and hugging myself, and we posed on Pt. Lobos in the juniper trees...all that scratchy stuff.

Schaeffer: Before they built the fences around it. You can't get out there like we used to.

Dahl-Wolfe: That's right. And then you know, Rudolph, we decided that they were beautiful and we took them to a drugstore that developed and printed, and we thought these were just beautiful, and so we went to Dassonville--we had the nerve--and we asked him if he could make enlargements of them. And he took one look and he said, "Well!" He started to smile. I got nervous as the dickens. I thought, "My God, I hope he doesn't recognize me," because I was scared in those days--so different from today--and he said, "Oh, the negatives aren't good enough to make enlargements." So that was our experience with Anne Brigman.

Mitchell: Louise, would you talk about how color and design was taught in those days and how unusual it was?

Dahl-Wolfe: Well, I think it was terribly unusual because, as I say, at that time everything was dirty color and Rudolph's class was revolutionary. Of course, naturally, we in California didn't see art until the World's Fair, in 1915. It was quite an experience for art students. I had started at the institute in 1914. The reason I started then was because I was ready to graduate and I was really falling behind because I was more interested in going riding in the park! Some of these boys had automobiles and I'd go riding in the park. My sister was teaching at the high school and she came home to my mother and said, "Either she gets out or I quit teaching." It was an ultimatum.

All the teachers went to my sister and complained about me; the Spanish teacher that I never learned my Spanish, et cetera. I was terrible, and the only one who didn't complain was the dressmaking teacher. I did well in her class.

Mitchell: You had dressmaking up there?

Dahl-Wolfe: At Poly High. That's when I came to the art school, in 1914. When the Fair came in 1915, this really set us all up; we had season tickets to it. All that we'd seen in California were paintings at the show at the Bohemian Club. They were all mud-sauce paintings; they were dirty colors, browns. Naturally when Rudolph came with this putting pink and red together,

- Dahl-Wolfe: that was enough to knock your top off. This was something you didn't see. I don't know about the east; in the east, do you think at the Art Students League that they saw anything better?
- M. Wolfe: No, nobody taught color in the east, nor at the Art Institute in Chicago either.
- Schaeffer: But it soon spread everywhere.
- Dahl-Wolfe: They taught color in a sense. They taught you how to paint color but they didn't teach color as Rudolph taught color.
- Schaeffer: The structure and the form of color.
- M. Wolfe: They didn't talk about the spectrum, depending on who you studied with. If he painted blue, then you painted blue too.
- Schaeffer: I think... I was teaching very much from the influence of Arthur Dow and then I got this little book on prismatic color.
- Dahl-Wolfe: We all had to do the color wheel.
- Schaeffer: A color chart is one over there. [pointing to the wall] See, the spectrum band is from red to orange-yellow, and so on, to violet on the blue-violet, but in the color wheel you joined the two extremes with purple and magenta. And because the two vibrations overlapped, which isn't true in the life, you see... I developed quite a metaphysical interpretation of that, too, in recent years. Should I speak on it?
- Mitchell: Yes, of course.
- Schaeffer: Of course, all the spectrum colors correspond, very much like the octave in sound, only you see them instead of hearing them. Because they come in an octave, from red through blue-violet, and each one, each color corresponds to a state of consciousness.

Red is a very active color, very active. Each color has a negative aspect and a positive one, too, but the positive one is action and the life blood. Of course, from another standpoint red is very materialist, too. And people have certain preferences of red.

Orange is an outgoing color, and yellow a more intellectual. My beloved yellow-green, green-yellow, I always call it my creative color. Then you come into the quiet, meditation colors of green and turquoise, and then blues and violets and purples correspond to the spiritual aspects of the mind.

Schaeffer: But here is magenta, red on one extreme, which has to do with the material world, with the physical world, and here is violet-blue or blue-violet, which has to do with spiritual consciousness, the right side of the brain; the other side has to do with the left side of the brain. Here you have the mingling of red and violet-blue wavelengths of life, which isn't in the spectrum you see. But you can mingle that, with paints of course, and the vibrations mingle on the retina of the eye. (That was the discovery of before the turn of the century.)

And so here you have the physical (we live in the physical body, you see), but you have that balanced by living in the spiritual mind. Whereas the violet, the purple symbolizes the spiritual values and the red the material value. That's how we live harmoniously, fully and harmoniously. We just can't go flying off into imaginary wings and space, we have to keep our feet on the ground, be practical, so magenta is the color that symbolizes that union of the spiritual values and the physical values. That's my latest theory.

You can't make magenta. Magenta is a color that is extracted from dyes and you find it in flowers.

M. Wolfe: I was thinking, they say you put a little of this and a little of that, but we never used the word magenta.

Mitchell: What was it about the Bay Area during that period, the excitement that was here at that particular period?

Dahl-Wolfe: Yes, I think it was the 1915 Exposition that did everything. We Californians hadn't seen anything. We didn't have any great museums like they have in the east; we didn't see anything. We saw oriental things in Chinatown, and that was a great source. I know so many of the art students--you know that, Rudolph--we'd go down to Chinatown and the stores were marvelous before the war. You could see the great treasures, wonderful things. Not done for the tourists; they were real. Real things.

Schaeffer: I have my cupboards full of them.

Dahl-Wolfe: And wonderful.

And the stone rubbings. You know where I first heard about stone rubbings was in grammar school with Catherine Ball. Did you know her?

Schaeffer: Yes, I have her book. She wrote the loveliest tribute to me in that book. It's right behind you there.

Mitchell: Is she a Californian?

Dahl-Wolfe: I think so. Wasn't she, Rudolph?

Schaeffer: I think Catherine Ball was one of the great influences in directing me to--and of course, Chinatown, you couldn't escape Chinatown.

Dahl-Wolfe: She was supervisor of art in the elementary schools.

Schaeffer: Anyway, Oriental art was in the air here, and--

Dahl-Wolfe: I had her from a little kid in the primary school.

Mitchell: I want to read this tribute to Rudolph because it's so good: "To Rudolph in full appreciation of his great service to the community in awakening the aesthetic sense and to developing the creative imaginations of serious students of art. From his devoted friend and admirer, Catherine M. Ball. December, 1937."

Dahl-Wolfe: I knew her from grammar school because she came to the grammar school and would bring stone rubbings. And she always dressed in sort of a blue; she had blue with blue rings, blue stones, and blue beads and she--

Schaeffer: And she was a bit of a tyrant, too. Oh, she ruled, she ruled her staff with an iron fist.

Dahl-Wolfe: I don't hear much about art in the public schools anymore. When I stop to think of the marvelous time from 1915 through the twenties into the thirties, creativity was in the atmosphere.

Schaeffer: That's right. It was in the air.

Dahl-Wolfe: What a change. The telephone building was the only high rise in San Francisco, then.

Mitchell: But what interests me about the period that spans the turn of the century here is that there are many very exciting creative people who came out of that period. In dance there was Isadora Duncan; in literature, Jack London, Gertrude Stein, and Kathleen Norris; and there was so much activity in photography, and in painting. It was a very fertile, exciting period. It was almost a utopian period.

Schaeffer: A few years ago there was an exhibition in Pasadena called "California 1910." Have you seen that catalog? Well, I'll show you the catalog.



Mitchell: Did you by any chance know during that period a family named Boynton?\*

Schaeffer: Oh yes, the Boyntons. I was up there with Isadora's brother, Raymond, and the Boyntons and we had dinner. They had an open home, you know; they had the columns around. Is that still there, I wonder? They were all vegetarians. The children, once a week they liked to have a little meat. When I went to Paris in 1925 I contacted Raymond, and so every time Raymond came with his flowing robes and his sandals, he always came to the school. He showed us all how to get up from the floor, he got down on the floor and showed us.

And I knew Isadora's mother, Mrs. Duncan, who lived in Hayward somewhere. I went with a friend to her house, one time.

Oh, you bring back so many memories. Let us get together again.

---

\*"Dance at the Temple of the Wings: The Boynton-Quitow Family in Berkeley," two volumes, typescript of an oral history conducted 1972 by Suzanne B. Riess and Margaretta Mitchell, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1973.

## APPENDIX II

## QUOTATIONS FROM RUDOLPH SCHAEFFER

I was influenced by the philosopher Keyserling who said:  
"The truth of the world is in relationship, not in the  
number of things which are many, but in the relationships  
of many which are one."

People should live their art in everyday life and see beauty  
in commonplace things.

Man is a creative spirit. In creating on any level there is  
a joy in the heart.

Love, in its essence, is wishing good for others and acting  
upon it if you can.

On love and beauty:

Everything outside ourselves is tied to the cosmos. From  
inside out we can express a harmony with cosmic consciousness  
of which we are a part--if we seek balance and harmony in our  
lives.

Beauty is part of the universe. We respond to the harmony  
and, in loving it, we experience wholeness.

Rudolph Schaeffer,  
in conversation with  
Margaretta Mitchell, 1981

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